



2016

Project Year Book

“From Despair to Deliverance”

The King David Project

Cate Russell-Cole

2016 Project Yearbook: “From Despair to Deliverance,” The King David Project

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
Updated 2015 Articles	
How Gentle Kings Become Killers.....	6
Did King David Have Diabetes? (The VD Psalm).....	8
2016 Articles:	
Things You Need to Know About Isra'el in King David's Time	11
New Information: The Historical Isra'el in David's Time.....	14
Why There is So Little Archaeological Evidence of David	17
Biblical Celebrity: the Hazard of Fame Based Thinking	19
Boldly Approaching God: The Example of David.....	21
A Matter of Character and Trust: The Problem With Lies	24
David and Spiritual Maturity.....	26
King David and the Status of Women.....	28
King David as a Romantic Figure - Disempowering the Word of God.....	31
Why The Bible Doesn't Work As A Mythological Tale: King David	33
David, the Underdog?.....	36
Discovering David's Most Important Task as King.....	38
Dancing with King David: A Reminder of How Much God Treasures Us.....	40
Getting Over (Really) Big Mistakes	42
How We Can Use Goliath's Sword.....	44
Hidden Sins	48
How David Compares to Other Near Eastern Kings	50
How David Would Want to be Remembered.....	52
"How Long?" When Answers to Prayer Don't Seem to Arrive	54
How to Control King-Sized Egos: The Examples of David and Moses	57
How to Kill Giants:	59
Jonathan: Valiant Role Model of Faith.....	61
King David's Approach to Violence and What We Need to Learn from Him.....	65
King David's Diplomacy: Manipulative or Spirit Driven?	67
Kintsugi and Kings: Using the Blessing You've Been Given.....	69
Luke Skywalker and King David: The Secret of Winning Wars Against Evil.....	71
Milk, Honey & Remembering How Much God Values You!	74
Obedience That Hurts	76
How the Old and New Testaments Collide in David's Life	79
Our God is a Different God	82

The Political Threats to David's Reign.....	85
When No One Can Agree on David.....	89
The Deep Ancient Roots the Psalms Sprang From.....	91
David, The Lonely Shepherd: Myth or Reality?.....	93
What the Torah Taught David About the Love of God	95
When Kings Normally Go To War:	98
When You Don't Know What to Say: How to Help the Hurting	100
Why David Taught Through Psalms / Songs	101
"Work the Problem?" What King David and Astronauts Have in Common.....	103
Yesterday's Hero: Ancient Politics or, How to Keep a King Humble	105

Only Published on the Masada Rain Blog 108

David's Stelae: The Psalms as Public Memorials and Private Prayers.....	108
Bible Geek: Feeling Limited by "Technology?"	110
What David Would Say to You on a Bad Day	111
Succession, Sin and Subjugation:	112
Comparing David with The Art of War by Sun Tzu.....	114
When Terrifying Psalms Suddenly Look Quite Tame	118

Appendices 120

Project Links.....	120
Project Values	121
Statement of Faith	122
Author Biography	124
Other Publications by Cate Russell-Cole	125
Prayer Journal Workshop Free Ebook	126
Pathways Free Ebook	126



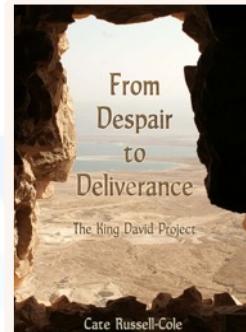
Introduction

Welcome to the 2016 Year Book for “From Despair to Deliverance: the King David Project.” This book is a follow up to the Project’s self-titled first book and holds additional and updated information. The first book is available from:

- The Internet Archive:
<https://archive.org/detailsFromDespairToDeliveranceTheKingDavidProject.pages>
- Google Drive Download Link:
[\(ISBN 978-0-9873175-9-9\)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B48Uj4PGwiVzUTVHWxRWUpyVHc/view?usp=sharing)

“From Despair to Deliverance: the King David Project” is a non-profit initiative, that seeks to make the life of King David easy to understand and relevant, so that believers gain inspiration and comfort from the life of King David.

I have always loved David: he has taught me to worship and the Psalms keep me afloat through many trying times. Late November 2014, I was writing my second novel, which had David in it as a character, and I hit a wall of dissatisfaction. Realising that what I had really wanted to do was write about King David, not my series, I decided to abandon the novels and study his life in depth.



Along that journey, I have found a great deal of misinformation and rumour, plus a lack of simple resources on David’s life. So in January 2015, I began to build a web site to share what I’ve learnt as a Creative Commons enterprise. The site has been successful and I have also branched into the psychology behind David’s story. In late 2015 the Masada Rain blog was started to house all the additional, useful pieces of information that couldn’t fit on the site, and to record my journey.

The biggest problem in understanding King David’s life is that there is so much detail and not enough detail! Explanations are housed in words which are easily missed in the text; plus as chapters sit end to end, timing is lost. This site sources many opinions, both Jewish and Christian and hopefully will provide clarity on some of the sticky areas that Bible readers struggle with.

The title “From Despair to Deliverance” was prayerfully chosen as it represents:

1. the repeated passages of growth in David’s life, from pain to joy, despair to deliverance;
2. how learning about King David can help us move from despair to deliverance (and joy,) in our own walk with God, and
3. this also applies to the nation of Isra’el, who God was moving to a place of prosperity and safety through David’s kingship.

This is a non-profit initiative and you can use the content any way you wish.

God bless you. May you know the depths of the Father’s love for you and praise Him with the same joy and fervour that King David displayed.

Cate Russell-Cole

Brisbane, Australia
January 2017

Updated 2015 Articles

How Gentle Kings Become Killers

It can be very hard to comprehend how gentle, kind people who love God, can pick up a sword and wipe out opposing nations. This is one of the issues I see people battle with in studying the life of King David. While we are introduced to him in 1 Samuel as a brave young warrior, a mighty man of valour, this image seems to harshly contradict the Psalms and our understanding of him as a God-fearing, righteous ruler. This article will look at why and how David had to act as he did.

As I write this, we live in an age of religious and ethnic tolerance and those values have been perpetuated with the spread of Christianity throughout the world. It is morally imperative that we don't put people to the sword just because we don't believe in the same god. So why did David do it and how should we interpret his behaviour?

In David's time, God's kingdom of Isra'el did not live in safety. There were constant threats of invasion, being taken as slaves, robbery, rape and murder. God raised up a man after His own heart, David, to lead the people to safety and ensure that they followed Him, the one true God. [Ref. 1 Kings 11:34; 2 Samuel 5:12 and Judges 2:2-3]

For Isra'el to be safe, the surrounding nations had to be bought under control. This was predominantly due to their polytheistic lifestyles, which continually poisoned the spiritual lives of the people of Isra'el. The references which repeatedly advise, implore and demand that the Israelites resist and get rid of these gods are many and include, from Deuteronomy alone: 7:16 and 25-26; 12:2-7 and 29-32; 20:17-18; 28:13-14; 29:16-21. This is not an exhaustive list. Following other gods would lead the people to destruction and the Lord did not want that to happen. Why?

Yahweh is known as a jealous God, but He is so for protective reasons. This is a point in history where religious tolerance just doesn't apply and if there were religions carrying out these practices today, tolerance would not apply now either. Throughout every culture, if you study standards of morality, there are some practices which are intolerable, regardless of nation, year, race or religious creed. These include murder, prostitution and harming others. Sadly, these neighbouring religions demanded obedience to rituals which involved all those elements.

Here are the worst offenders:

- Ba'al: a fertility and war god, who demanded self-mutilation, ecstatic shamanistic like dances, ritual sex (which in cults that exist now, is often abusive and non-consensual, which may have been the case for some people then also,) and child sacrifice.
- Asherah: the poles for this goddess are frequently mentioned in the books of Kings. She was considered the consort to Yahweh as Isra'el later dived into a spiritual abyss. Prostitution was a part of her worship.
- Ashtoreth or Astarte: she was an agricultural and fertility goddess who had a close association with Ba'el and again, ritual prostitution was involved in obeying and appeasing her.
- Molech: he was represented as an ox or calf, and he required the sacrifice of live, young children by burning and ritual sex practices.
- Chemosh: he was a war god who delighted in human sacrifice.

Realise that the people conceded to these demands, as they were terrified of the consequences of disobeying their god/goddess.

Would you like people who followed these practices living next to you and having any influence on your children? My guess is that you said no.

In Deuteronomy 31, God told Moses before he died, that Isra'el would eventually break the covenant they had made to obey God and worship Him alone. Moses was given warnings and a song to teach the people, in order to make them realise that God knew what was about to happen: but God wasn't going to see it happen without a fight.

The warnings are dire and repeated and they needed to be. Psychologists have carried out studies to find out why people don't meet their goals, and what they need to accomplish tasks to improve their quality of life. The research has found that if you show people the probable pitfalls and their chance of failure, rather than simply pumping them up with "you can do it, you will win" messages, people are more likely to achieve what they want as their outlook is more realistic. If you know you can fail, you don't slacken off.

Thus the Lord told and told and told Isra'el, and David went to great lengths to ensure the physical and spiritual safety of the nation. After David died, his son Solomon began the path to total spiritual destruction and the exile of Isra'el, by marrying women from these dangerous nations, who worshipped these forbidden gods. In succeeding generations, first born children were sacrificed, the sexual immorality in Isra'el was overwhelming and the city of Jerusalem was so corrupt, the Spirit of God left the temple. [Ref. Ezekiel 10]

But still, even knowing this would happen, the Lord tried repeatedly to save His people. It is an act of a loving God which is incredibly precious and beyond price.

So now that you know why it happened, how can a good man kill to get a job like that done? This applies not only to David, but all the entire army of Isra'el.

When people are seen as a threat, fear kicks in and this motivation will enable people to do what they would otherwise consider unthinkable. When a threat is that close, people kill to survive. Consider Leviticus 6, where the Lord points out the punishment for disobedience. The people knew that they could lose everything. (Please see the footnote below.)

There are two other dynamics which will turn a sweet guy into a killer. As a crowd loses its individuality in a mass of faces, it becomes easy to dispatch or enslave them. They are not known by name, fame, or family ties and therefore, the guilt that murder and violence causes is significantly reduced for each soldier. It would be diminished even further, as the army acted under the orders of King David and General Joab, son of Zeruiah, David's sister. If a figure of authority orders an act of violence or immorality, then research has found that people are far more likely to carry it out and they don't fret about repercussions as much. It is the commander who will get the moral blame, not them. This is termed moral disengagement.

The last point which would affect the behaviour of David and his army is the old rule of 'an eye for an eye.' [Ref. Deuteronomy 19:21] In the Old Testament there was no known final judgement of the sinner and the saint. It was believed that for whatever you did wrong, you had to be punished for in life, not the afterlife; therefore rough vengeance was enacted through acts of war like this. It was the standard for the people at that point in history, and this law was common throughout all the ancient world, even up until the successful dominion of Babylon. Through the laws that God handed down through Moses, this was ratified as legally correct behaviour. God had said in Deuteronomy 9:4:

"Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you."

This verse implies that if David was successful in defeating those nations, it was because God had judged them as wicked and He enabled their defeat. God was acting on His own laws.



Did King David Have Diabetes? (The VD Psalm)

I once searched for opinions on King David's cause of death and couldn't find one. All we know from 1 Kings 1 that was that he was so cold, he couldn't get warm, no matter what was done. For a hot climate, that's extreme.

I researched 'disease caused hypothermia,' and came across a list of 123 causes. That list was way too large to search through, so I gave up. Then I found people online talking about the 'venereal disease psalm.' They were quoting Psalm 38:7 "For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh." That got me searching into probable causes for that symptom. They include eczema, which is likely in a hot climate; and also, bacterial folliculitis, which is where the hair follicles, in areas of the body that don't get much ventilation, become infected. These kinds of skin problems are also common with diabetes.

The Better Health Channel says: Some types of diabetes have no symptoms, and can go undiagnosed for a long time, but some common symptoms can include:

- Being more thirsty than usual;
- passing more urine;
- feeling tired and lethargic; (2 Samuel 21:15-17, Psalm 6:2, Psalm 31:9 and 38:10)
- slow-healing wounds; (Psalm 31 and 38, causing people to avoid him. Psalm 38 mentions infection.)
- itching and skin infections, particularly around the genitals; (Psalm 38:7)
- blurred vision; (Mentioned in Psalm 38)
- nausea and vomiting; (This could, perhaps, explain his being bent over in pain.)
- weight loss; (Psalm 31:9 and 102:5 which is also an unmarked Psalm of David whose wording matches Psalm 6.)
- mood swings. (These could have accompanied diabetic heart disease and his mood is obvious in Psalms 6, 41, 30, 31, 38, 55.)

Psalms 6 and 69 also mention unrelenting pain which would accompany David's symptoms (and possibly could also be caused by wear and tear plus the injuries he incurred on the battlefields); and in Psalm 41 he indicates that he has been on his sickbed again. So the Psalms that tell of illness are Psalm 6, 30, 38, 41 and 55; plus 102 talks about sickness coming upon him in midlife, which is consistent with what I am saying here.

Psalm 69 does also refer to pain, but it is unclear as to whether it is physical or emotional in cause. The Psalm laments treasonous persecution by a close friend, which broke the King's heart. It is notable that his illness is recorded in correlation with traumatic life events. This is typical of diabetes and chronic illness. Stress exacerbates symptoms and causes worsening, or relapses.

The treatment for diabetes involves getting insulin levels back to normal. In David's time, that would have been no easy achievement. The healers of the day used a local plant named Sharp varthemia (Chiliadenus iphionoides), whose properties are now being formally researched. By the grace of God, that could have been enough to keep him going. In Psalms 56:5 and 103:3 David talks about the Lord rescuing him from all his diseases and death. All denotes multiple health issues and linking death with these events, certainly spells out how serious they were. Having friends with diabetes and researching this topic has left me astounded that David survived to the age of 70, with only the most basic treatment. It's Godly providence in action!



Another symptom worth noting, is his heart palpitations, which David writes of in Psalms 38 and 55. Diabetic heart disease is a common complication of diabetes. It can cause coronary heart disease (CHD), heart failure, and/or diabetic cardiomyopathy. Those who have diabetes have the

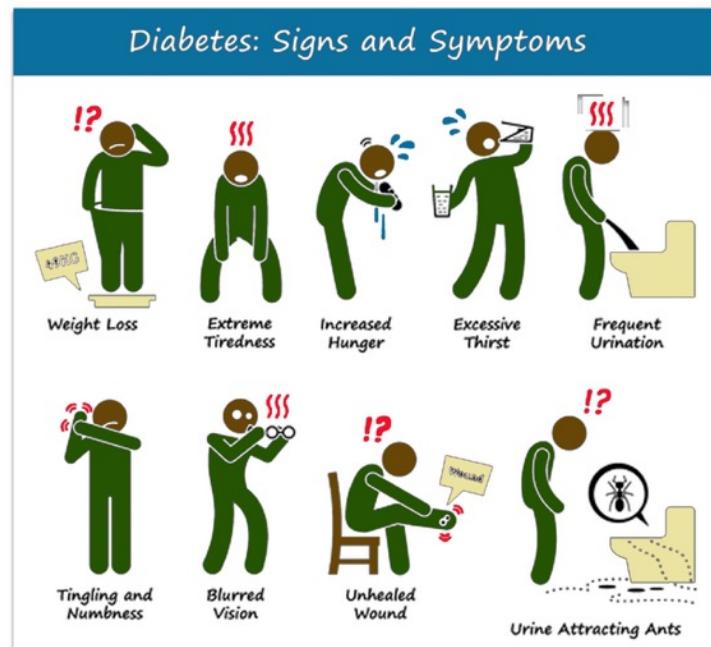
same risk of heart disease, as someone who has already suffered a heart attack. It is made worse by stress, creates a feeling of depression and doom and occurs at a younger age, than when heart disease normally affects people. It fits in with what David has described.

While David certainly was no angel, there is a common criticism of David's actions which could have also been attributed to diabetic health problems and heart issues, rather than sinful behaviour. "In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites." 2 Samuel 11:1 The argument is that if he had gone to war, he never would have fallen into bed with BathSheba. Because David stayed in Jerusalem while his men went out to battle, I have often seen it presumed that he was being lazy or indulgent.

Many scholars believe that that reference may only be a time marker, not a judgement. Kings in David's time were caught up in a heavy load of administrative, diplomatic and judicial duties and unless he was needed for morale or strategy, his time may have been better used in Jerusalem and he may have been more derelict of duty to go to war than keep the country in order. Or could this have been because he was too ill and thus, too greater liability on the battlefield at that time? Several years later, his men force him off the battlefield permanently, as he is weak and tired. [Ref: 2 Samuel 21:15-17]

It was not King David's custom to attend to smaller battles, as was evident from when he first took the kingship of Judah. David knew that the Lord had always won Isra'el's battles and thus, he most probably wasn't obsessed with the notion that the success of every military campaign was dependent on him. In modern terms, his delegation is an attribute of wise and successful leadership.

A realistic view of David's involvements in battle as a king is presented in the introduction to Psalm 60. At times, Joab and the army went out without David to begin or finish a battle, and this was normal and acceptable. "...and Joab returned and killed 12,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt." Again, in 2 Samuel 2:12-17, Joab takes the army of Judah (David's forces) into battle against Ishbosheth and Isra'el without David. There is no Biblical criticism of these actions.

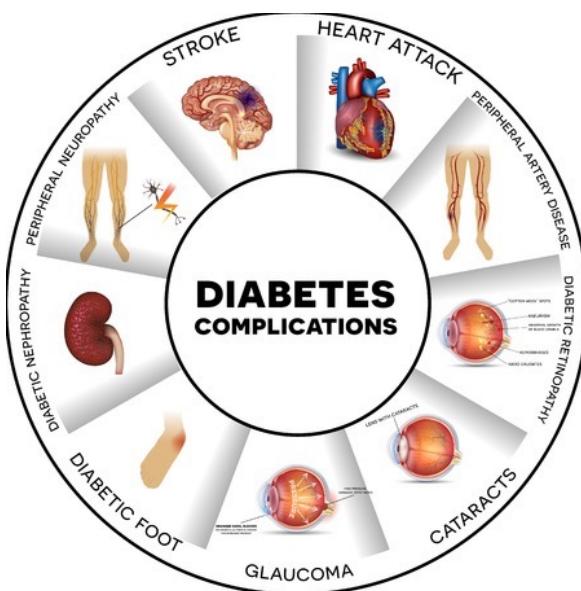


THE JEWISH POPULATION AND DIABETES

There is long standing statistical evidence, that diabetes is a major health problem within Jewish communities, particularly as Jews typically marry other Jews, so health issues can develop from less variety being present in the gene pool. *The Jewish Encyclopedia addresses diabetes and interestingly, says: "Sudden emotional excitement, grief, terror, worry, and anxiety may each and all be followed so closely by diabetes that there is no room for doubt as to their having occasioned it. It is well known as a result of commercial disaster. "When stocks fall, diabetes rises in Wall Street," says Dr. Kleen." The worst symptoms appear to occur after the deaths of David's sons Amnon and Absalom. It is after he has had to deal with the famine and is over thirty years into a stressful reign as king. This seems plausible.

The article goes on to state: "It has been observed by many clinicians that the Jews bear diabetes better than other races; thus, Van Noorden (l.c. p. 176) states that it is remarkable how some patients will endure glycosuria for years without much discomfort, succumbing at last perhaps after decades to what is supposed to be heart-failure. This peculiar type of diabetes, and this remarkable endurance by the human body of the anomalous metabolism of diabetes, are more frequently met with among women than among men, and almost exclusively among Jews. Dr. Stern has pointed out another peculiarity; viz., that Jews dying of diabetes succumb through coma more frequently than non-Jews. Thus, while the ratio of fatal coma cases occurring in New York city in 1899 to the total mortality from diabetes was as 60 to 202, or 29 per cent, coma occurred in 43 per cent of the cases of diabetes among Jews."

If you think you may have diabetes, please see a doctor immediately.



HELPFUL REFERENCES

- Hypothermia is a frequent sign of severe hypoglycaemia in patients with diabetes. [http://www.diabet-metabolism.com/article/S1262-3636\(12\)00053-5/abstract?cc=y=](http://www.diabet-metabolism.com/article/S1262-3636(12)00053-5/abstract?cc=y=)
- Folliculitis <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/folliculitis/basics/symptoms/con-20025909>
- Hypothermia and Diabetes http://www.biologyguide.net/hbio4/7_homeostasis.htm
- Hypothermia WebMD Diabetes is listed as the first cause. <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/what-is-hypothermia?page=1#1>
- *The 1906 Jewish Encyclopaedia, Diabetes Mellitus <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5161-diabetes-mellitus>
- Diabetic Heart Disease as a Complication of Diabetes <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/heart-disease/>
- What is Diabetic Heart Disease? Causes, Symptoms etc. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/dhd>

* For more historically based information on why David didn't go to war, please see this article: <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=34662>



2016 Articles:

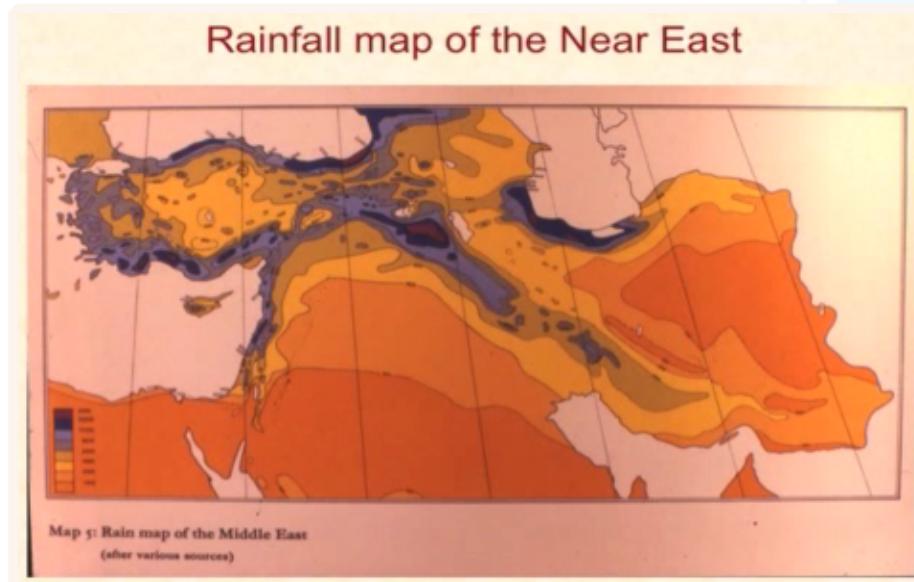
Things You Need to Know About Isra'el in King David's Time

It has taken me a few years to pull all this information together and a lot of it, I have never heard before. Over many years at church, I have heard a number of Bible Study leaders ask why such a small area of desert land has caused so much trouble throughout history? They have always answered with a spiritual warfare focus, but looking back in time, to when this area was central in the known, most inhabited part of the world, there are many reasons why Isra'el was a key area above and beyond the spiritual.

The facts below set the scene for David's Kingdom and explain why Isra'el had so much trouble with neighbouring nations.

1. Isra'el was less impacted by desert in David's time and lay in an ancient fertile crescent that circles the west and top of the Far and Middle East. The **rainfall** was excellent, and thus crops and cattle were able to thrive. It was indeed the land of milk and honey [Ref. Exodus 23:3] and worth fighting over by the surrounding nations. Unfortunately this screen shot isn't clear, but the blue areas indicate good rainfall.

Like Australia, Isra'els geography is misunderstood. If you look at Isra'el now, you will find that the entire country is not **desert**. There are snow fields in the mountains, the area around Galilee is stunning, and the west is bordered by the beauty of the Mediterranean. Don't believe the Bible movies which like to film in the cheaper desert areas, misrepresenting Isra'el's full natural beauty. Many areas of the Middle East which are now desert, were once thriving agricultural areas of beauty.



The encroachment of the desert comes from soil depletion and land clearing. God told His people to let their fields rest one year in each seven, and they disobeyed; thus what we see now is a sad reminder of what happens when we misuse natural resources. The land has suffered accordingly from these poor farming practices, war and other calamities. A lot can change in a few thousand years.

2. With good food supply comes **population growth**. This places stress on the available land, food and water resources, and leads to raids and wars between neighbouring nations, as everyone needs the land to survive. In particular, God had always commanded His people to be fruitful and multiply (e.g. Genesis 48:4 and Leviticus 26:9 and many more), so they needed the full extent of the land which had been promised to them by God. [Ref. Numbers 34 gives the borders.]

3. Isra'el's west, along the Mediterranean, had a major **lucrative trade route** running north to south, through it. Like the ancient city of Petra which was incredibly rich, if a nation can control a trade route, they can make a fortune in providing travellers with food, water, safe accommodation and safe escorts to their destination; and they can also choose to tax caravans travelling through. One thousand years or so after David, the Silk Road from modern Asia through to the Mediterranean, ran straight through Isra'el. It's a key site.

4. King Saul and David's time saw the **fall of the bronze age economy**, as the iron age was becoming established. This meant that new, cheap metal would be available to a majority of the population and thus, farming and warfare would be revolutionised. The Philistines were so worried about the affects of this, they forbade the Israelis from having metal workers and blacksmiths. [Ref. 1 Samuel 13:19]

Historically, we know that major changes such as these, caused economic upheaval for quite a time. The earlier move from nomadic life to the establishment of permanent agriculture-based towns is thought to have been a pivotal issue in the ancient world. Diets degraded as different foods, such as bread, were eaten, and their production caused health problems. Skeletons have been found which show spinal damage, where people were bent over for many hours a day, grinding wheat to make bread. Other, similarly serious problems would have accompanied this new cultural change.

In the same way that technology has changed our life style, there is a cost. The move from bronze to iron would have affected ore sales over a massive geographical area, as bronze is an alloy made from tin and copper. This would affect those supply markets all over the known world, **destabilising parts of the economy** which were dependent on them, and creating poverty for populations who had now lost a massive portion of their income. Problems with the steady supply of tin would have created high prices and demands which meant that turning to iron killed markets in the same way that a huge reduction in the need for coal or petrol, would affect the modern world.

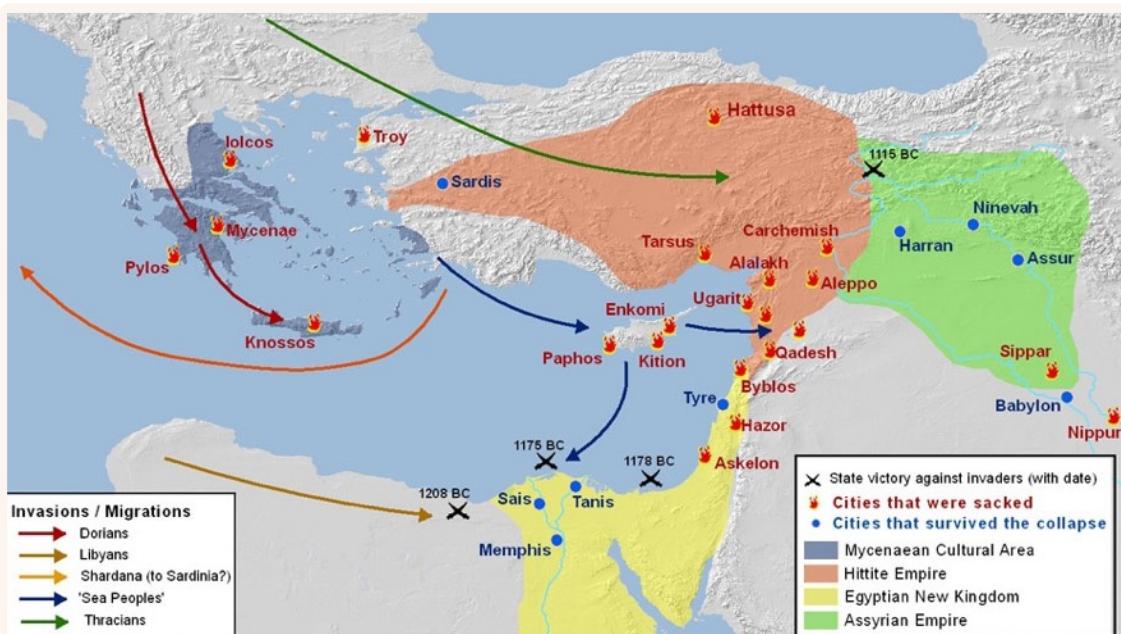
This is an area which needs much more research, but it is interesting to note that once the iron age was well established, nearly 800 years after David, the way **society interpreted and related to their world began to drastically change**. This impacts our understanding of David's life, as we find it incredibly difficult to relate to his Old Testament cultural worldview. Ancient acceptable practices such as slavery, genocide, polygamy etc. which deny civil rights, are far removed from our modern, Western values. We find these issues very difficult to deal with when they were carried out by Godly leaders such as David. His view of the world and what was acceptable under the Laws given through Moses, greatly differ from ours, and difficulties in understanding his thinking, motivation and actions frequently occur.

After David's time when people who were more settled and less at risk of starvation and political upheaval, they were now freer to invent, question how the cosmos and nature worked, and for the first time, begin to consider how man affects his own destiny, rather than every event being attributed to acts of the gods. This has been identified in studies which show how introspective language began to appear in literature part way through the New Testament and into the modern era.

We know that this societal change gave rise to the work of Plato, Aristotle, then later, Galileo, with the usurping of the flat earth theory. Mankind's hunger for scientific knowledge grew and started to displace reliance on gods. In David's time, the curiosity about the natural world would have been there, as is shown in the Psalms, but the ability to chase answers and formulate elaborate theories based on data collection, seemed to not exist. (Or evidence of this has been lost.) The theory is that people's energy was caught up in the desperate need for survival, which collective affected all within the ancient world. Without the time to explore alternatives, people believed that their life was determined by their observance to their deity, who had to be appeased and who called the shots.

This is a completely different way of thinking which we cannot easily comprehend, as there are no Judaic, or Christian references to fully explain how it worked, in a manner we can grasp.

Christianity was in the future of mankind and the Jewish Talmud (secular holy books interpreting the Old Testament and setting down laws which God did not give man), was not written until mankind had entered this philosophical and scientific age.



Understanding this conflicting world view has been a hard task for me and one I will continue to work on. I see God teaching His people the same values we now have since the earliest times, but to get to where we are now, was quite a process, and one that definitely reinforces how badly the world needed Jesus to set us on a better path. When studying David, I now take this difference in worldview into account.

REFERENCE SOURCES

- Whilst there have been many, the information on rainfall comes from The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. You may benefit from their videos on the Near East and Ancient world. <https://www.youtube.com/user/JamesHenryBreasted/videos>
- Please also visit this TED Talk on Your words may predict your future mental health | Mariano Sigman which talks about a small part of the puzzle. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTL9tm7S1lo>



New Information: The Historical Isra'el in David's Time

In August a post was published which talked about the economy and climate of Isra'el in King David's time, and how this affected his reign. All my posts are written ahead of time, sometimes by months, and in the intervening time I have completed months of study on ancient Isra'el and her neighbours. This has made some of the information in that post redundant and given me a much clearer picture of what did go on.

That's good news! The project is a process of growth and discovery, and after two years, it's still exciting to ponder what gems I will come across next. The greatest take home message is that you need to study beyond the Bible to understand it. Ancient history is a critical resource, as is archaeology. Any proper course of study takes in all the surrounding information, and David's life should be treated no differently.

This post will give you additional information which makes greater sense of Saul and David's stories.

The late Bronze Age Collapse crippled all the empires and city states from modern day Greece up to Turkey, across to the Persian Gulf affecting Iran and Iraq, through the area of Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Palestine and right down into Egypt. There is a list of around 38 *cities which show destruction layers from this time frame, some which were critical to economic survival. The impact of the collapse was greater than the end of the Roman Empire and is the greatest economic disaster in all of history.

Cities were completely abandoned, with no clues as to the cause left behind; the population dramatically declined, famines occurred, and even powerful nations such as Egypt and Mesopotamia, wilted and struggled for several hundred years. The affects were the same as if our modern key trading cities such as Singapore, New York and London all ceased to function within fifty years, with no one else arising to cover their function.

This collapse occurred during the era of the Book of Judges (1200 BC) and the effects lasted into and past Saul and David's time. Smaller nations such as Mycenae, Minoa, and Ugarit ceased to exist altogether and Cyprus lost written language and all trade for around 300 years. The loss of written language is why the era following the collapse is known as a dark age. In essence, the progression of civilisation was catastrophically set back.

Before the collapse, the Near East had a very modern society which was not equalled until the height of the Greek Empire around seven hundred years later. The area is considered by historians to have had an "international economy" with extensive, well engineered diplomatic relations between the countries, and trade networks which bought a great deal of wealth into the region. Bureaucracy was in full swing, laws were well established, public works were undertaken, better military tactics were being developed and civilisation was anything but stone age and backwards. Life was surprisingly modern, much, much earlier than the Greek and Roman empires. Their later success was birthed in this period.

At this time, as we do today, most of the population relied on food supplies coming through the trade networks, as the bulk of the population dwelt in cities and worked as merchants or manufacturers. When the trade routes collapsed, many people faced starvation as they didn't have their own land for food production. It is thought that natural disasters such as earthquakes and the possible eruption of the volcano at what is now Santorini, contributed to the collapse, as one simple factor alone is insufficient to create such wide-spread, long-term havoc. There is also a theory that climate change during that time led to the perfect storm which created the complex collapse.

There is archaeological evidence to back this up. The Near East is now much drier than it had been and the flora and fauna has dramatically changed as well. Elephants and hippopotamus populations used to roam Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), creating local sources of ivory. They are long gone, perhaps from hunting, perhaps from climate change or a combination of both?

Before and during the collapse, there were many diplomatic letters sent back and forth between Kings, such as between the Kings of Egypt and Ugarit, which provide useful accounts of what occurred in the Near East during this time, some which were cries for help because of the invasion of the Sea Peoples.

From King Ammurapi to the King of Alasiya: *"My father, behold, the enemy's ships came (here); my cities were burned, and they did evil things in my country. Does not my father know that all my troops and chariots are in the Land of Hatti, and all my ships are in the Land of Lukka?... Thus, the country is abandoned to itself. May my father know it: the seven ships of the enemy that came here inflicted much damage upon us."* Translation by Jean Nougaryol et al. (1968) *Ugaritica* V: 87–90 no. 24.

These letters were well preserved on baked clay tablets, but in the dark age that followed the collapse, this form of communication ceased, leaving us with a frustrating black hole of lost information. Most of what we have comes from destruction layers uncovered by archaeologists, pollen records showing evidence of famines and some clay tablets. For that reason, this period is considered to be one of the great mysteries of history.



Disenfranchised populations threatened everyone's national security, and the standard of living plummeted. The arrival of these "Sea Peoples," as Egypt referred to them, (which we believe were the Philistines), were part of the Bronze Age Collapse. They arrived in several mass migrations, attacked the local inhabitants with the men at the forefront and their women, children and all of their possessions following close behind. It appears they were also homeless because of the collapse and this is the cause of their arrival in Canaan, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Isra'el and the Hittites land to the north-west. Not only were trading routes cut by invasion, but communication routes would have also been affected, so the problem simply snow balled as conditions became worse.

THE IMPACT ON ISRA'EL

We don't know the actual impact of the collapse on Isra'el, except that David's reign must have still been affected by the insecurity of the surrounding nations and still reduced trade routes. We do know that he was active diplomatically and that some luxury goods were available through Tyre, but life was still hampered by upheaval and uncertainty. It is not a peaceful time for anyone. Trade, government and communication didn't have to be reinvented, but it was partially suffocated until empires such as Neo-Assyria could rise up and completely stamp out security threats.

War has always been common in antiquity in order to gain more land and better resources, but it does appear to be heightened in this period, which is seen in the desperate pleas for help to allied kings as seen above. Isra'el would have also been economically affected as trade was functioning at a lesser level than the past, and raiders were keen to relieve the Israelites of what wealth they did have.

"Many people say, "Who will show us better times?" Let your face smile on us, Lord."
Psalm 4:6

The necessity of enlarging and securing borders for economic survival and to ward off the Philistine threat, could have been the reason why kings routinely went to war every spring. [Ref. 2]

Samuel 11:1] In 1 Samuel 13:19 we know that the Philistines were withholding blacksmiths from the Israelites, as they didn't wish them to access better weapons. They would have done the same to any other territories they could bully, and would have to have been a menace to trade in and out of the area as well. This kind of stranglehold produces poverty, which gives rise to desperation and conflict. It all comes down to survival, possibly mixed with greed.

Long-term struggles such as these exhaust populations and can also create the kind of power struggles which threatened David's leadership, even into his old age. [Ref. Psalm 71] David's inability to quell all security threats against Isra'el quickly may have made him unpopular. It is easy to look back now and see all the factors and realise why David was still going to war twenty years after he became King of Isra'el, but to his population at that time, their main concern was that life was scary, unpredictable and tough and they needed deliverance now!

*"Meanwhile, my enemies lay traps to kill me.
Those who wish me harm make plans to ruin me.
All day long they plan their treachery.
But I am deaf to all their threats.
I am silent before them as one who cannot speak.
I choose to hear nothing,
and I make no reply.
For I am waiting for you, O Lord.
You must answer for me, O Lord my God."* Psalm 38:12-15

We know from the books of Samuel that David was allied with the King of Tyre who gave him the luxury items needed to build his palace. During those years, Tyre was an island (it is now a peninsula, a lot can change in three thousand years), and they traded in luxury items such as the cedars of Lebanon, tin, copper, ivory, perfumed oils and high-end hand crafted items. This shows a resurgence of luxury trade at around 1000BC, but a great deal of work was ahead of the nations to rebuild the wealth of the region, and much of that would have been hindered by the relentless wars, as everyone fought for survival and a secure, wealthy territorial share of the land and its resources.

ESSENTIAL STUDY RESOURCES

- University of California, Berkeley, Near East Studies:
Web site: <http://cmes.berkeley.edu/category/videos/>
Youtube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-XXv-cvA_iBIm79tgbWrFKg9rwMVDytI
- The Oriental Institute:
Web site: <http://oi.uchicago.edu>
Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/JamesHenryBreasted/videos>

*AFFECTED CITIES AND NATIONS

- Anatolia (Asia Minor): Troy, Miletus, Hattusas (Hittites), Mersin, Tarhuntassa
- Cyprus: Palaeokastro, Kition, Sinda, Enkomi
- Mesopotamia: Ugarit, Tell Sukas, Kadesh, Qatna, Hamath, Alalakh, Aleppo, Carchemish, Emar
- Levant / Canaan: Hazor, Akko, Megiddo, Deir 'Alla, Bethel, Beth Shemesh, Lachish, Ashod, Ashkelon
- Modern Greece area: Teichos Dymaion, Pylos, Nichoria, The Menelaion, Tiryns, Mycenae, Thebes, Lefkandi, Iolkos, Knossos, Kydonia.



Why There is So Little Archaeological Evidence of David

There are anti-Semitic and anti-Bible arguments out there that David did not exist, as no archaeological evidence has been found of him. This has slowly changed. We have tablets from Moab which mention the House of David and the City of David has been found exactly where the books of Samuel locate it. Aside from a refusal to allow the Temple Mount to be excavated by archaeologists, there are practical reasons why more hasn't been discovered.

- David's era (roughly 1000 BC) is classed as "pre-history" due to the lack of written records which recorded events. Even though we have many artefacts from this time and before that, they only provide glimpses and hints as to what happened, and many crucial facts which would give us a clear picture of life in that era are missing for all the cultures in the Near East.
- The Laws handed down through Moses produced a dramatically different culture than that of the surrounding nations. Whereas pagan Kings built steles which commemorated their achievements and displayed their devotion to their gods, the Lord's command to not make graven images (idols) would have stopped righteous Israeli Kings from following the same practice. Pagan Kings associated their success, and justified their actions and right to rule by their close association with their gods. Stele's often show the Kings with a god in very close proximity to them, blessing their actions. Israel absolutely could not do this without breaking the Law's given by their God, Yahweh. Archaeologists who do not consider the impact of the Laws in the Torah may deny the existence of David if they are expecting to find artefacts such as steles. Less ego and an adherence to the law, equates to less evidence.
- David was a humble King who attributed his successes to the Lord, therefore it is doubtful that he would have built his own version of a stele, sans a god image. However, if his military victories had been recorded in any fashion, humble or otherwise, the evidence would have been destroyed by the sacking of Jerusalem and the palaces by Babylon when Judah was taken into captivity in 587 B.C. The only evidence we have of subsequent kings such as Hezekiah, comes from other nations because of this.
- Isra'el's records may have been recorded on hide scrolls rather than clay tablets, which mean they would not have survived time. (3000 years)
- After the Late Bronze Age Collapse, all the nations from Cyprus in the Mediterranean through to Egypt, Assyrian, Tyre, and Babylon were thrown into disarray and forced into a long term survival mode. This collapse occurred during the era of the Book of Judges (1200 BC) and the effects lasted into and past David's time. Some nations took 300 years to recover.

Before and during the collapse, there were many diplomatic letters send back and forth between Kings, such as between the Kings of Egypt and Ugarit, which provide useful accounts of what occurred in the Near East during this time. These letters were well preserved on baked clay tablets, but in the dark age that followed the collapse, this ceased. Thus that kind of evidence was not generated in David's time, or not generated the same way. Again, if hide had been used rather than clay, it's rotted away to nothing.

Who knows, there could be much more evidence of David out there waiting to come to light...

EVIDENCE FOR DAVID:

Tel Dan Stele (right)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9i2eDI7nViw>

It is worth noting that David's name means beloved, so that would fit the criticism regardless.

- “David’ Found at Dan,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1994.
Philip R. Davies, “House of David’ Built on Sand: The Sins of the Biblical Maximizers,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1994.
- David Noel Freedman and Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, “House of David’ Is There!” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1995.
- Ryan Byrne, “Archaeological Views: Letting David Go,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 2008.
- “Strata: A House Divided: Davies and Maeir on the Tel Dan Stela,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 2013.
- Avraham Biran, “Dan,” in Ephraim Stern, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, vol. 5 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Biblical Archaeology Society, 2008).



Mesha Stele: Housed at the Louvre Museum (right)

- <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/mesha-stele>
- <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/artifacts-and-the-bible/moabite-stone-mesha-stele/>

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Biblical Celebrity: the Hazard of Fame Based Thinking

A year ago, if you had asked me what I will say to King David when I meet him face to face, I would have had trouble finding an answer. I expected to be really nervous! It's because he's so famous. He's a King and he's... well, he's David. I also have no idea what I am going to say to Jonathan, or Moses, or Esther, or Paul... and I kind of want to hide from the prophets, because I feel so inadequate beside them. Can you relate to that?

My instinctive reaction prods me into assessing about how much the worldly values of celebrity culture have crept into how I perceive Biblical heroes. The sad answer is, the secular image of fame has influenced my thinking far too much. Celebrity fills a spiritual void in the secular world. It gives lost people aspirational role models, regardless of whether they are saints or sinners. Who doesn't want to be comfortably wealthy, good looking, healthy, happily married and successful? In moderation, I could take it.

For that matter, as Christians, who doesn't want to be like David? Don't we want to slay giants, rule nations and live a spiritually successful life? Of course we do! I own kosher salt with David's name on it, and many secular and Christian movies and books have been written, using David as a symbol of success. God did promise David fame, but it has gotten way out of hand. [Ref. 2 Samuel 7:9] As with secular celebrities, we get caught up in all the glamour, excitement and intrigue of David's life, and we can easily, unconsciously make the fleshly mistake of treating him like a famous person, not like the servant of the Lord that he is.

Fame has nasty connotations. We all know who Oprah Winfrey is, but as much as we may relate to her and want to be like her, we know that we cannot be her. That is the unconscious lesson we apply when we look at any celebrity. "If only we could... but we can't." David is of such a calibre that we look at him in awe. We see him as an impossible person to equal, let alone beat. This can stop us from trying to follow his lead in spiritual areas and that should never happen. David should motivate us to imitate him through prayer, praise, studying the Word, submission to God, obedience, fasting and adoring the Lord. That is the pivotal core of every area of David's success; he didn't win because he was brave and strong, it was because he daily practiced those things, thus the Lord was able to use him.

Please stop there and read those last seven words again: "the Lord was able to use him." There is the real problem that Biblical celebrity causes: when we look at David and all he achieved, we stop looking at the simplest of facts: that GOD did it THROUGH David. As David submitted to God he became God's channel and all the success he had, really was God's... and David readily, publicly, often admitted that. (See The Anti-King: David and Humility link below.) But our culture teaches us to look at the man and not the boring, routine factors that shaped him, so we lose this humble perspective.



Ephesians 1:19-21 proves we can be like David: "*I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead...*" God's power worked through David as it worked through Jesus and Paul and now, all of us. Think of how much more we could grow if we caught hold of that truth and stopped looking at the people in our Bible as elite celebrities that we cannot be like. We must focus on how they allowed God to work through them, as we CAN copy that successfully. If we imitate David's spiritual habits, God can carry out His perfect Will through us, which is our ultimate goal. We need a God fixation, not a hero-seeking one. (Please also read The Habits That Built King David's Faith, the link is below.)

David was a humble man. He would never want to be seen as a celebrity, as he delighted in placing his focus on the Lord. For our thinking to be swept away by the glory and glamour of kingship and success, is to negate every precept that the Psalms teach us. David's words through the Psalms always push us in the direction of the Lord as the answer, we need to go in that direction and stop being distracted by wanting to be a giant slayer, or a king ourselves. It makes me sad when I hear Christians say how much they want to rule and reign with Christ, over and above them telling me how much they love to pray or hear God's voice. We're aching for fame and big, visible success: the things that are most likely destroy us; and in wanting them, we ignore building our character and making ourselves usable by the Lord.

We need a reality check that pulls these worldly standards out of our heads! You have heard it before, Romans 12:2:

"Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

Anything the Lord does in your life won't look like it did in David's and it shouldn't. God's love for you is so great, He will give you what is going to fit, bless and build you and the people around you. You don't need to battle Philistines, when you can conquer your own fears and hurts. You don't need to liberate a nation, when you can bless people around you and move them towards Jesus. We're not judged on not being like David, we're judged on whether or not we did what the Lord asked US to do. So let's get our heads out of the bright lights and go about our work with our eyes fixed on Jesus. It's exactly what David would also advise you to do.

*"Trust in the Lord and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
Take delight in the Lord,
and He will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in Him and He will do this:
He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,
your vindication like the noonday sun.
Be still before the Lord
and wait patiently for Him..." Psalm 37:3-7a*



Boldly Approaching God: The Example of David

We are familiar with Hebrews 4:16: "*So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most;*" and Ephesians 3:12: "*Because of Christ and our faith in Him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence;*" but what you may not know, is that boldness before God isn't a New Testament privilege that arrived with Jesus.

This confident attitude in approaching God is evident in how David communicates with the Lord, and was also seen in Moses, Job and other Psalmists. It may look a little disrespectful sometimes, but it is a hallmark of a dynamic, covenant relationship with God.

*"I cried out to you, O Lord.
I begged the Lord for mercy, saying,
"What will You gain if I die,
if I sink into the grave?
Can my dust praise You?
Can it tell of Your faithfulness?
Hear me, Lord, and have mercy on me.
Help me, O Lord."* Psalm 30:8-10 (See also Psalm 44 by the Sons of Korah)

*"Then Job spoke again:
"My complaint today is still a bitter one,
and I try hard not to groan aloud.
If only I knew where to find God,
I would go to his court.
I would lay out my case
and present my arguments.
Then I would listen to his reply
and understand what he says to me.
Would he use his great power to argue with me?
No, he would give me a fair hearing.
Honest people can reason with him,
so I would be forever acquitted by my judge."* Job 23:1-7

I didn't know about these ancient roots of boldness, until I read "Worship in Ancient Israel," by Walter Brueggemann. On page 46-47 he writes: "*Isra'el also engaged in truth telling about its life with YHWH in confession, lament and protest... Isra'el was not a submissive, second-rate player, but was a full, vigorous partner to YHWH with an unapologetic presence and an unembarrassed voice that refused to be silenced or cowed... Isra'el refuses to submit too readily to YHWH's sovereignty when that sovereignty was seen to be unfaithful; in such circumstances, Isra'el instead of submitting, made a claim for itself against YHWH.*"

Page 49: "Such speech, in its rawness, is in fact an expression of great faith; it expresses deep conviction that when YHWH is mobilised in order to honour YHWH's covenantal commitments to Isra'el, YHWH has full capacity and power to right any situation or wrong. Thus the voice of protest and rage is characteristically in the service of plea and partition to YHWH."

I agree with Professor Brueggemann that calling God to action like this can seem irreverent. However, David is never rebuked by God for being too direct. For that matter, neither is Job. God could destroy Job for speaking out, but He doesn't. Instead, God is angry with Job's friends for not representing Him accurately, and then God restores double Job's losses. [Ref: Job 42:10] It seems that those without the faith to get in God's face and speak their mind lose, and those with the faith to be bold, win. Honesty with God obviously pays off.

*"Protect me! Rescue my life from them!
Do not let me be disgraced, for in You I take refuge.
May integrity and honesty protect me,
for I put my hope in You." Psalm 25:20-21*

Calling on God is submissive, rather than subversive. David could have taken his problems into his own hands and dealt with his enemies by the sword. Instead, he kicked a hole in God's door and got a better answer.

If you study the Psalms, you will find that his entreaties to God are also **tempered by praise** and a promise to make an offering to God when deliverance has been granted. God gets His due recognition, gratitude and with David, the testimony of what God had done is also shared among the people via a Psalm, to encourage them as well. David's brave, bold faith benefitted many people, including us today.



*"Declare me innocent, O God!
Defend me against these ungodly people.
Rescue me from these unjust liars..."
verse 4: "Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God—the source of all my joy.
I will praise You with my harp,
O God, my God!
Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?
I will put my hope in God!
I will praise Him again—
my Saviour and my God!" Psalm 43:1 and 4-5 (Also see Psalm 66:13-15)*

So are there limits to how bold we can be? Yes; the limits begin if we abuse the Lord, blame Him for our problems, or in short, cease to address Him with any attitude that doesn't demonstrate the *fruit of the Spirit. He is merciful and patient, but He is neither a scapegoat, nor a punching bag. Respect is absolutely always called for, in every situation.

There are times when like David, regardless of the trouble we are in and how urgent it is, we just have to wait patiently for an answer and keep hoping in the Lord. There are other times when due to complications, such as the effect of other's free will on our circumstances, God can't do as we ask, and we have to submit to His authority and wisdom, like it or not. Plus there are times when we're wrong. Our 'fix it' answer was a poor one. In all these conditions we need to adopt the humble attitude Job had when he said:

*"I know that You can do anything,
and no one can stop You.
You asked, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?'
It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about,
things far too wonderful for me." Job 42:2-3*

Despite how humbled he is, Job still has the courage to front up and reply to the Lord.

So the next time you're struggling, don't hesitate to be honest with God. He already knows every detail of your circumstances and feelings. so hiding what is really going on is impossible. The Lord has promised to **bless us with every spiritual blessing. We are ***beloved, treasured heirs with Christ, and He will always ****be on our side to help us through every trial and battle. Tell Him how you feel and ask for help... And don't stop asking and seeking Him. You're not crossing a line, you're building your faith and a better, active relationship with Him.

REFERENCES

- "Worship in Ancient Israel: An Essential Guide," by Walter Brueggemann, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. ISBN: 0-687-34336-4. (Academically, theologically worded and not easy to read for the average person, but if you can get through the wording it is a massive blessing. I learned so much which reflected on my relationship with the Lord and encouraged me.)
- *The fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22-23
- **Every spiritual blessing: Ephesians 1:3
- ***Beloved joint heirs: Romans 8:15-17
- ****By our side: Deuteronomy 31:8 and Hebrews 13:5
- Re: Psalm 43:4: *"Then I will go to the altar of God..."* This may refer to David planning to go to the tabernacle to give a peace offering as thanks, as per Leviticus 7:11-15.
- Moses' honesty with God can be seen here: *"Moses heard all the families standing in the doorways of their tents whining, and the Lord became extremely angry. Moses was also very aggravated. And Moses said to the Lord, "Why are you treating me, your servant, so harshly? Have mercy on me! What did I do to deserve the burden of all these people? Did I give birth to them? Did I bring them into the world? Why did you tell me to carry them in my arms like a mother carries a nursing baby? How can I carry them to the land you swore to give their ancestors? Where am I supposed to get meat for all these people? They keep whining to me, saying, 'Give us meat to eat!' I can't carry all these people by myself! The load is far too heavy! If this is how you intend to treat me, just go ahead and kill me. Do me a favour and spare me this misery!"* Numbers 11:10-15



A Matter of Character and Trust: The Problem With Lies

Going through David's life, there are some parts which bother me and one is his dance with the truth. David told three major lies to get out of trouble in his early life:

1. to the Priests at Nob; [Ref. 1 Samuel 21, Nob and point 2.]
2. when he first fled into Philistine territory and had to feign madness to escape, and
3. when he deceived the Philistine King Achish, whilst attempting to avoid Saul's persistent persecution. [Ref. 1 Samuel chapters 27 and 29]

Despite the severity of the circumstances which led him to lie, they leave me with a really bad impression of his character. Was lying a nasty trait which followed him through life? As so much of David's life was marked by outstanding faith and he was righteous, his lies stand out even more. They have had me questioning just how far he could be trusted, especially as some Middle Eastern cultures approve of habitual lying to "save face." So I decided to delve into the matter further, to try and comprehend why he sinned that way.

Logically, I can understand why he lied those three times: "*if you can't escape by fight or flight, you lie,*" and any of us would be very hard pressed not to react the same way when backed into a corner with our life at stake. However, David is supposed to be a "type" of Jesus: a human who exhibits the character of God, teaching us what God is like and that we can trust Him. Repeated incidents of lying threaten to destroy that.

Looking at lying from a psychological angle, the size of the consequences of not telling the lie determine how serious the offence is. If a 'protective lie' saves you from death, it is easily forgivable, as it wasn't casual deception which foretells deep moral character flaws. If David wasn't lying for financial or power gains, or to bolster his ego, his lies can be considered as unwise without deeply tarnishing him. In 1 Samuel 24:5 we can see that David was well aware of what was right and wrong, and would self-correct, so I am led to continue to trust him.

But... whenever I read about David, I expect to see him react with faith, looking for God to help him as he did with Goliath, not legging it into enemy territory and lying to save his hide. He is to be the best David, flawless through and through to not disappoint me... but that expectation doesn't take a key fact into account: this time in his life featured a hard growth curve on the path to spiritual maturity. He was growing up and messing up along the way, as he struggled to build his trusting, God-dependent spiritual nature. His later character traits which produced the Psalms were in the process of being forged 'in the furnace of much affliction,' and like all of us, he started out weak, then through hard lessons, became stronger.

I have no idea how bad he felt about his deceptions, though I am sure he must have deeply regretted the consequences of his flight to the priests at Nob, (Saul massacred them in revenge). Living in Philistine territory must have also been an arduous task that he gritted his teeth through and hated. No one chooses to live with the enemy unless they believe that this is the only option left. God hadn't delivered him yet, and David had yet to learn to wait no matter what. The events of this long period, (from Nob to Gath was around seven years or so,) had to have awakened an awareness that he had to be totally dependent on the Lord for safety and deliverance; if not, he would only get himself, and others, into greater trouble. It would be an agonising experience to watch people die and suffer because of you, as you found your way through the maze of choices, striving to grow. I feel a deep compassion for him.

The bad parts of David's story are as helpful to us as the good. This portion of David's life reminds me that need I to be patient and encouraging with people while they are growing. They are going to make some big, serious mistakes; but blaming people and judging without understanding what

they were feeling and where they were coming from is useless. Thinking about what David did, I can't excuse his wrongs, but I can appreciate the stress he was under and where he was in his spiritual journey. I'm just glad that he came through safely to leave us with his testimony to the Lord's great patience with us as we overcome our own failings, no matter how many times we fall apart as we're learning.

"A psalm of David, the servant of the Lord. He sang this song to the Lord on the day the Lord rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul. He sang:

I love You, Lord;

You are my strength.

*The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my saviour;
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.*

*He is my shield, the power that saves me,
and my place of safety.*

*I called on the Lord, Who is worthy of praise,
and He saved me from my enemies.*

*The ropes of death entangled me;
floods of destruction swept over me.*

*The grave wrapped its ropes around me;
death laid a trap in my path.*

*But in my distress I cried out to the Lord;
yes, I prayed to my God for help.*

He heard me from His sanctuary...

*He rescued me from my powerful enemies,
from those who hated me and were too strong for me.*

*They attacked me at a moment when I was in distress,
but the Lord supported me.*

He led me to a place of safety;

He rescued me because He delights in me.

The Lord rewarded me for doing right;

He restored me because of my innocence.

For I have kept the ways of the Lord;

I have not turned from my God to follow evil.

I have followed all His regulations;

I have never abandoned His decrees.

I am blameless before God;

I have kept myself from sin.

The Lord rewarded me for doing right.

He has seen my innocence.

To the faithful You show Yourself faithful;

to those with integrity You show integrity.

To the pure You show Yourself pure,

but to the wicked You show Yourself hostile.

You rescue the humble,

but You humiliate the proud.

You light a lamp for me...

The Lord lives! Praise to my Rock!

May the God of my salvation be exalted!...

For this, O Lord, I will praise You among the nations;

I will sing praises to Your Name.

You give great victories to Your king;

You show unfailing love to Your anointed,

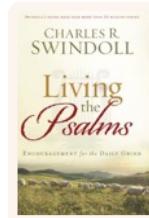
to David and all his descendants forever." Psalm 18:1-6, 16-28 and 49-50



David and Spiritual Maturity

“Lead me in Your righteousness because of my foes.”

I was reading Charles Swindoll’s “Living the Psalms,” when that sentence bought me to a dead halt. I don’t know about you, but I don’t talk like that. I’d say, “Lord guide me;” or “please strengthen me so I don’t become want revenge;” but I’d never think to ask straight up for righteousness.



Righteousness was a good choice. David got straight to the heart of everything he needed by using that word. It’s another example of the exemplary spiritual maturity that he showed from a surprisingly young age. I am well over double the age David was when he dealt with Saul’s attacks in a wise way, and I can’t hold a candle to his example. I would be trying to fight my way out of that situation, rather than maintaining my innocence to stay clean before the Lord. It takes more self-control to do that, than I possess.

Spiritual maturity is hard to quantify: it’s not static. It is not something that is gained which stays at a minimum fixed level; rather it’s a process of becoming holy, balanced and responsible. It affects the totality of how you react, think and feel and you can lose it all, or parts of it. When David sinned with Bathsheba and killed Uriah for convenience, he ignored the moral part of his maturity for a time, even though he was still mature in other areas. That incident is a reminder that we all have to work hard to keep our heads on straight. We never arrive with no danger of backsliding.

Spiritual maturity (and growth) are not accumulatively achieved as a result of ageing. It comes through surviving tough life experiences and hard work. A working definition of spiritual maturity covers an extensive number of areas and behaviours in life, and I see many of them in David. (This definition list is by no means exhaustive.)

- Uncompromising obedience to the Lord;
- God alone becomes your primary resource of strength, wisdom and guidance;
- you act and serve other people in love, not out of obligation, or seeking reward;
- you bring peace rather than create strife or problems, and settle disputes wisely;
- your pride is well on the way to dead; plus you don’t focus on your achievements publicly;
- you respond to your failures and sins with repentance and a desire to please God, picking yourself up off the floor, determined to do better (teachable and humble);
- you desire God’s correction and are willing to make adjustments to your thinking and behaviour;
- regardless of what hits you in life, you push forwards with hope, praising God;
- your attitude and faith are a catalyst which strengthens other people’s faith;
- you don’t treat God as a needs-delivering vending machine, but instead respond to Him with joy, trust and the positive expectation that He is there for you, whether you can feel that or not;
- you build your relationship with the Lord daily, without prompting, or because you’re desperate;
- you have tamed your tongue and are not caught up in appearances;
- you do not act out of vengeance or judgement, but with the fruit of the Spirit;
- you give all credit to God, or other people as appropriate, never yourself;
- you care for the elderly, sick and disadvantaged in the community without doing so because you feel motivated by guilt or duty;
- you’re kind, generous, loyal and dependable;

- you can be trusted to be moderate in dangerous areas, such as in the use of power, alcohol and sex...

... or to put it very succinctly, you have learned that God is in charge, where you stand in Him and you continuously lose your selfishness in order to follow and obey Him.

The rewards of seeking spiritual maturity are greater joy, peace, hope and stability. You cope with the ups and downs of life better, find more fulfilment in the path the Lord is leading you down and have an enriching, dynamic relationship with Him, which will pull you through any havoc that life can throw at you. That makes the process of slowly killing off your selfishness to become mature worth it. It is a long learning curve which is never easy, but the benefits make every moment of sacrifice undeniably worthwhile.



King David and the Status of Women

I need to say this before I start: Don't ever blame God for the low status of women in ancient Judaism. Go to the New Testament and see how Jesus treated them and you will soon see it is completely equal.

Long before the time of Abraham, when the city states were formed in Mesopotamia, that culture somehow made the decision to restrict the freedom of women, and it is the evolution of that decision which has poisoned most of eastern and western culture for six thousand years. It is not God's fault. While some passages in the Torah appear to be sexist, from the study I have done, I have realised that we don't understand many of the Laws that God handed down through Moses, as critical pieces of information which would put these commands in context are missing. Look to Jesus for the perfect view of how God treats women; He is the only reliable example available to us.

Quite a few people are not sure whether to like David or not because of the way he treated Bathsheba (which is clearly very wrong) and because he had so many wives. On one hand we have this beautiful spiritual role model who adores the Lord, serves his country tirelessly and inspires every generation; on the other hand we have an adulterer and murdering king, who was capable of manipulating circumstances to his own ends.

I read Scriptures like this one and shudder. “*Bathsheba bowed down, prostrating herself before the king.*” 1 Kings 1:16 That was the custom for approaching royalty, and further down in verse 23, the prophet Nathan did the same, so it was equality, but still, as Bathsheba was David’s primary wife, it just looks all wrong to me... but that is because I am a Caucasian Westerner and don’t live the same way.

Despite all this, I find the way women were married as concubines to be a human rights issue. I know that status was given to women unable to provide a dowry, but as they were considered lesser wives, there were serious consequences for the women and their children which affected the quality of their long term future. I don’t know why David had so many wives, but the bottom line is this: God was clearly not unhappy with David and would have given him more wives, if he’d wished for them. [Ref. 2 Samuel 12:8] I cannot judge and blame any man or woman, when God has chosen not to do so. He obviously felt that despite his sin with Bathsheba, David could be trusted to care for his wives and not fall away from the Lord, as Solomon did.

Just because modern, Western me does not like the way the ancient Isra’elites lived, doesn’t make it wrong, it just makes them very different. You can’t put a later culture in an old culture’s shoes and expect them to fit comfortably.

I don’t have all the research that would allow me to get into an in-depth exploration of the status of women in ancient Isra’el, [see the notes below for some helpful information,] however, I am able to explore how David treated them. Here is what we do know about David.

1. The culture at the time would have been sexist, but exactly how bad it was, I am not sure. We see women such as the prophet Deborah taking amazing **leadership positions** which were respected, (which in other cultures would be impossible,) and Miriam wasn’t physically punished or left behind as worthless when she sinned (put to death as an honour killing), so it appears that **Isra’el wasn’t as extreme as other cultures** who would not let women speak publicly, make decisions or leave the house at all. [Ref. Deborah appears in Judges chapters 4 and 5. Miriam: Exodus 15 and Numbers 12.]

2. We know that **David respected his mother** and that she was a **role model** for his spiritual walk.

There are two Psalms which refer to her:

*"Truly I am your servant, Lord;
I serve you just as my mother did;
you have freed me from my chains."* Psalm 116:16

*"Turn to me and have mercy on me;
show your strength in behalf of your servant;
save me, because I serve you
just as my mother did."* Psalm 86:16

3. **David was willing to be corrected by women.** Take Abigail for example in 1 Samuel. In a more sexist culture she would not have gone out to meet him, would never have spoken to him and he would have at least hit her for speaking in such a manner to a man.

"When the Lord has done all he promised and has made you leader of Israel, don't let this be a blemish on your record. Then your conscience won't have to bear the staggering burden of needless bloodshed and vengeance. And when the Lord has done these great things for you, please remember me, your servant!"

David replied to Abigail, "Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you to meet me today! Thank God for your good sense! Bless you for keeping me from murder and from carrying out vengeance with my own hands. For I swear by the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept me from hurting you, that if you had not hurried out to meet me, not one of Nabal's men would still be alive tomorrow morning." Then David accepted her present and told her, "Return home in peace. I have heard what you said. We will not kill your husband." 1 Samuel 25:30-35



4. **David showed great kindness and empathy** towards the concubine Rizpah in 2 Samuel 21:10-14 when her sons were killed to atone for injustices perpetrated by Saul. This was the right thing to do under Torah law, but David showed a lot of heart here. He didn't have to do this and many kings wouldn't have.

"Then Rizpah daughter of Aiah, the mother of two of the men, spread burlap on a rock and stayed there the entire harvest season. She prevented the scavenger birds from tearing at their bodies during the day and stopped wild animals from eating them at night. When David learned what Rizpah, Saul's concubine, had done, he went to the people of Jabesh-gilead and retrieved the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan. (When the Philistines had killed Saul and Jonathan on Mount Gilboa, the people of Jabesh-gilead stole their bodies from the public square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hung them.) So David obtained the bones of Saul and Jonathan, as well as the bones of the men the Gibeonites had executed."

Then the king ordered that they bury the bones in the tomb of Kish, Saul's father, at the town of Zela in the land of Benjamin. After that, God ended the famine in the land." 2 Samuel 21:10-14

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- According to current Jewish teaching: *"For millennia, Jewish sources have taught that women's physiological and psychological needs are different from that of their male counterparts. In God's infinite wisdom, he delineated different responsibilities for men and women according to their*

respective metaphysical and physiological needs..." Read the full article on the spiritual obligations of Jewish women here: <http://www.aish.com/jl/m/w/Women--Mitzvot.html>

- “*The role of women in traditional Judaism has been grossly misrepresented and misunderstood. The position of women is not nearly as lowly as many modern people think; in fact, the position of women in halakhah (Jewish Law) that dates back to the biblical period is in many ways better than the position of women under US civil law as recently as a century ago. Many of the important feminist leaders of the 20th century (Gloria Steinem, for example) are Jewish women, and some commentators have suggested that this is no coincidence: the respect accorded to women in Jewish tradition was a part of their ethnic culture. In traditional Judaism, women's obligations and responsibilities are different from men's, but no less important (in fact, in some ways, women's responsibilities are considered more important... According to traditional Judaism, women are endowed with a greater degree of "binah" (intuition, understanding, intelligence) than men... It has been said that the matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah) were superior to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) in prophecy. It has also been said that women did not participate in the idolatry regarding the golden calf. Some traditional sources suggest that women are closer to God's ideal than men... Women have held positions of respect in Judaism since biblical times. Miriam is considered one of the liberators of the people of Israel, along with her brothers Moses and Aaron. One of the Judges (Deborah) was a woman. Seven of the 55 prophets of the Bible were women.* ” Read more: The Role of Women in the Synagogue: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/jewfaq/women.htm#Synagogue>
- “*The wife held a subordinate position to that of her husband, at least in office, if not in nature. The ancient Hebrew women did not have unrestrained freedom as the modern women of the Occident have. In the Orient, social intercourse between the sexes is marked by a degree of reserve that is unknown elsewhere. Dr. Thomson says, "Oriental women are never regarded or treated as equals by the men." They never eat with the men, but the husband and brothers are first served, and the wife, mother, and sisters wait and take what is left; in a walk the women never go arm in arm with the men, but follow at a respectful distance; the woman is, as a rule, kept closely confined, and watched with jealousy; when she goes out she is closely veiled from head to foot. [Ref. Genesis 32]... But while these things are true, it must be understood that the Old Testament does not picture the wife as a mere slave of her husband. She is seen to exert tremendous influence for good or ill over her husband. And he showed great respect for her in most cases... Children in the East show nearly the same respect toward the mother as they do toward the father. The mother is believed to be entitled to honour and to have authority from God. Actually, the father and mother are looked at, as being the representatives of God in the matter of authority. They are considered as having this position no matter how poorly they fulfil their obligations. Hebrew children in general held their mothers in great respect, even when they became adults. This may be illustrated by the great influence exerted by queen mothers on the kings of Judah and Israel (1Kings 2:19; 2Kings 11:1; 2Kings 24:12, etc.).* ” Manners and Customs of the Bible: http://207.44.232.113/~bible/reference/m&c/m_c-BkMrk.html



King David as a Romantic Figure - Disempowering the Word of God

The Old Testament is a tough book to study. There are details missing, we don't always understand the culture and it's hard to get the hang of what it's all about. So sometimes it's easier to turn to movies or books which explain the story in a way we relate to. One option is to read novels, and I have read a few on David which have concerned me. As both a fiction writer and a student of David's life, I would like to share how novels can negatively influence our understanding of the Word of God.

We're not specifically told in the Bible that novelising the Word of God is wrong, but it creates practical problems by the power of suggestion. When we read fiction, as we become engrossed in the story which is presented to us, it gets harder to identify what facts are real, and which are embellished. Studies have now shown that memories are altered each time we recall them and that adds to the problem. If we remember what we've learned about King David as we read a novel about him, those memories of what the Scriptures actually say can easily be changed by the text we've been exposed to, and we may not realise it.

When an author works on a historical novel, they have to deal with masses of details being missing and unobtainable. To counter that problem, they devise character traits, motivations, scenes and most of the aspects needed to turn what, in David's case, is a summary of selected facts, into a story which flows. This is where the main danger comes in. When you assign emotions, thoughts and motivations to someone, you can unintentionally, completely misrepresent them. If, like David, their story comes from the Old Testament, you are also grappling with a radically different moral and cultural mindset, which is extremely hard for a Westerner to understand, (even with extensive research.) This hampers the work, and can easily result in an incorrect analysis of why and how David acted, which can then affect the benefit his life gives us through the Bible, as we're less willing to listen to his words.

I have seen book and movie authors try and make David a combined romantic figure and power crazed villain as they simply don't understand his culture. We expect people in the Old Testament to think like us, hold exactly the same values and live much the same way. Nothing could be further from the truth.

One series of books I read quoted the Psalms and make King David a God-fearing good guy, then added fictional circumstances and motivations to known facts, to create scenarios to move her storyline and its themes along. While the work is sold as fiction and should only be taken as such, the problem is that her own thoughts and biases against polygamy, plus her misunderstanding of the laws handed down through Moses, dominated her storyline and in the end, David came out looking evil in a manner which contradicts Scripture. (Please see my article on polygamy. <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32569>)

"For David had done what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and had obeyed the Lord's commands throughout his life, except in the affair concerning Uriah the Hittite." [Ref. 1 Kings 15:5] David wasn't an angel and if he had been, few could relate to him. However, to villainise someone because issues such as polygamy, the role of an ancient Israeli King and the status of women aren't well understood by our Western culture, isn't to do the Word of God justice. David's actions appeared as sin or made no sense. It extended to more than



David. His wives were all treated as powerless victims, as life in David's time was approached from a modern viewpoint, which has no relevance on a culture which existed nearly three thousand years ago. There were masses of negative comments online which reflected my own feelings about this author, and I approached the Publisher, defending God's Word. Sadly, they did not want to listen.

For me, reading this series illustrated the pitfalls of embellishing a partial storyline, and thankfully, has made me very cautious about what I read, and especially, what I write, regardless of whether it's fiction or not. Incidents such as David's sin with Bathsheba are there to teach us the consequences of our actions. They are not meant to be romanticised and to do so, is to disrespect the intention the Word of God has in telling us about Bathsheba.

The book of Revelation gives a stern warning that anyone who adds to that book will be punished. Perhaps that should make us pause and consider how we handle all of God's Word?

"And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book."
Revelation 22:19

In Deuteronomy 4:2, Moses tells Isra'el:

"Do not add to or subtract from these commands I am giving you. Just obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you."

The Word is the inspired truth, written by many authors, but compiled as God the Father has determined it should be. There are historical writings and Psalms that were never included in our Scriptures. Why not? They are not writings that the Lord wishes to include. We need to be careful about what we do. Paul tells us that teachers of the Word are subject to more severe judgement as they can lead so many astray. (James 3:1) If you novelise, whether it is intentional or not, you are teaching, as you are planting ideas in people's heads. Caution has to be taken.

If you are going to read a novel based on the Bible or watch a movie, please approach it with your Bible open beside you, and take the time to ask the Lord if He wants you to read it (and wait for an answer.) I love novels, I love movies which make the Word of God come alive, but I don't want to approach Bible study with an attitude which may shut out what the Lord wants to teach me.

HELPFUL READING

- Judgement Versus Discernment: Reading the Bible Righteously <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32949>
- Why So Many Wives? Polygamy <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32569>
- Does Absolute Power Corrupt Absolutely? <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32731>
- How Gentle Kings Become Killers: David as a Warrior and Psalmist <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32773>
- The Anti-King: David and Humility <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=33025>



Why The Bible Doesn't Work As A Mythological Tale: King David

David fits the image of a hero. He potentially makes the perfect epic poetry type hero and his life does fit a perfect story arc. Does that make his life likely to be a fictional tale, or embellishment on the actual life of a man named David who was a King? Where does Scripture not fit myth?

While we associate non-Christians as being the ones who are the most likely to label Biblical truth as a moral tale or embellished story, Christians can also be found doing the same, as they do not believe that the Bible is the literal truth, or because the thinking of the world has affected them. Some of the saddest and most judgemental teachings I have seen on David's life have come through theologians who are not saved, but have studied critical theology as an intellectual interest and have published books which don't show any dedication to the spiritual character of Christianity. Thus they feel able to tear Biblical figures apart without mercy, and assign interpretations to Biblical events which aren't in line with either the message or the sanctity of the Word.

For example, "King David His Reign Revisited," by David L Wright. His work is written from a limited, biased standpoint, which is not in line with either the Jewish or Hebrew faiths. Wright teaches at Emory University as Associate Professor of the Hebrew Bible and has won awards for previous books. [<http://candler.emory.edu/faculty/profiles/wright-jacob.html>] In his own words: "*I enrolled in one of Reinhard Kratz's seminars in which we analyzed the formation of the Sinai account in Exodus and its relation to Deuteronomy. In the very first session I realized how extraordinary biblical literature is and how fascinating it is to study it critically.*"

"Most PhD students often have personal histories that prompted them to devote their lives to biblical studies. Nevertheless, these students usually know how to set aside, pragmatically, their personal religious convictions in order to create a space conducive to discussions with their colleagues who come from different backgrounds and have different commitments." [Source: <http://thetorah.com/ten-questions-jacob-wright/>]

How sad it is that you can study the Word of God in such depth, and not let it touch your spirit.

In 2015 I wrote a blog post "Dames, Daggers and Dance: When History Forms It's Own Perfect Story Arc" which looked at David's life through the eyes of a story teller. I have been a writer since I was a child, and have always studied writing techniques. When studying David, I was surprised to see that the total accounts of his life form a story arc. It made me wonder, whether the concept of the story arc was built on literature or reality? However, it did not make me wonder whether David's life was a fabricated legend and here's why. [Source: <https://masadarain.wordpress.com/2016/01/14/dames-daggers-and-dance/>]

David's life just doesn't work as a story. Here is a short list as to why, based on the many frustrations I've gone through in studying David's life.

1. Only the highlights and most necessary cautionary incidents, (useful for moral spiritual instruction,) have been told. It is like reading a biography retold in badly summarised dot points. There are far too many details missing which make parts hard to interpret and lead to heated debates. So much critical information about him is missing or unclear, I have nearly given up study in frustration several times. Trying to get a clear picture of key incidents is nearly impossible.
2. Pinpointing exactly when things happened, in what year and what age, is impossible, as is the correct order of events in 2 Samuel chapters 10-12 and 2 Samuel 23 to 24. Big events are written back to back, with no orientation as to how old David was, or how much time had passed. This is especially true of the Psalms.

3. You can only work out David's motivations by going back to the Torah and carefully studying Leviticus and Deuteronomy in detail (preferably the whole Torah); then by going forward to the Psalms and fitting it all together in a cultural context... which also has to be researched outside of the Bible, to understand the history and culture. In a story, you are told what someone's motivation is and why they act how they do.
4. The books of Samuel have multiple authors and David's story is completed in 1 Kings (written by yet another author,) and reiterated as more of a political tale in 1 Chronicles by yet, another author. That fracturing blasts apart the possibility of it being written as an allegory.
5. It's missing traditional narrative roles (such as ally and trickster), the people needed to push the tale forward into the next part, or give it more relatability. Also, God could fit many of the standard character roles, as David was close to Him, was helped by Him and powered by Him. That messes up the standard way deities are bought into legends.
6. David isn't the hero of his life story, God is, which is not a normal format. Readers want the key figure to be either a hero, or an anti-hero. David hands all the glory to God and constantly points people to Him to meet all their needs. [Ref 2 Samuel 22-23]
7. If you use Joseph Campbell's monomyth (The Hero With a Thousand Faces), it doesn't fit good story telling structure for an epic tale. Campbell wrote his book based on the way legends have been recorded since the beginning of time, from every culture able to be studied. I have tried to fit David's life into that structure, and it won't mould in, in too many places. I couldn't even take specific events and get them to form that iconic structure. For example, refusal of the call (David never did that); then the last seven stages don't apply, as David never returns home with the prize, going back to normal life, and there is no clear point of single victory. It is also interesting to note that David is not mentioned in Campbell's book as one of the studies legends. There is only an image of David and Goliath. I was sure he would be in there, but he's not. [Source: http://www.jcf.org/new/index.php?categoryid=83&p9999_action=details&p9999_wid=692]



SPECIFIC EXAMPLES:

- a) The most complete chronicle in David's life is "David and Goliath," which has become an iconic symbol in both faith, and the secular world. It neatly unwinds and then wraps up, but few other anecdotes from David's life do. David's greatest achievements are making the nation of Isra'el safe from its enemies and the building of the first temple. The remaining details of Isra'el's journey to national safety are slim. You cannot recreate complete, engaging battle scenes and pinpoint a proper timeline of who, when and where, in the manner in which movies like Star Wars are made. We know a little about David's achievements as a warrior, and a little about Benaiah, and a little about Joab, and a little about many characters... but not enough to build one complete character who we can understand. The Bible is just not meant to read as a legendary epic set of tales. It's an historical account with greatly limited information.
- b) As for David's actions in returning of the Ark of the Covenant to the midst of the nation and the plans for building Israel's temple, this part of his life is impossible to understand without knowing the full history of Israel up until this point, and studying the way surrounding nations worshipped at that time... then to top that off, the long timeline of related events has a deeply unsatisfying ending.

In 2 Samuel 5-7 we can see how much David wants to build the temple and has it planned and prepared down to the last detail... then it doesn't happen until he is dead. Why? Because he obeys God... and we don't know what he is obeying unless we pick the account which starts in 2 Samuel 6 up in 1 Chronicles 22. Did you know that David gave his personal wealth over to help fund the temple? Probably not, because the complete set of details are scattered, and is hard work to put together and then correctly interpret. The story doesn't story.

c) As a final illustration of why David doesn't fit together as a work of fiction, we need to look at David and Bathsheba. Again it is hampered by a lack of information. Arguments rage as to whether she baited him, or he took advantage of an innocent young girl. To make that incident work as a proper tale, you need clearer and more content, plus, to make David and Bathsheba work as a single piece of fiction, you need more elements to make a proper story and cohesively pull all the summary into a readable work.

The prophet Nathan called David out his sin, but he'd need a far greater role as a mentor. And where is David or Bathsheba's best friend / sidekick to help move the tale along? The ambiguities which lead to heated accusations of rape would not be there. Every detail, including a clearer picture of David's thoughts and motivation would be included. Including literary devices such as Solomon's style of poetry in the Song of Songs would help too, but that does not exist. What we do have is an incident from David's life which teaches us consequences. It is not meant to be romanticised and to do so, is to disrespect the intention the Word of God has in telling us about Bathsheba.

David is real, raw, flawed, inspirational, conflicted and cohesive, or in other words, as complicated as any human, which is why we relate to him. If you looked at any of our life stories, they would be just as muddied, hard to follow and complex. From the point of view of a fiction writer and a Christian, David reinforces my belief that the Bible is God's inspired Word, not a man-made collection of religious propaganda.

*"Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the nations,
And I will sing praises to Your name.
He is a tower of deliverance to His king,
And shows lovingkindness to His anointed,
To David and his descendants forever."* 2 Samuel 22:50-51



David, the Underdog?

One of the lessons that I struggle the most to learn is who I am in the Lord, and how valuable I am to Him. I can get so stuck in my problems, that I forget that the One who built and maintains the Universe, loves me and is on my side. When I think like that, I defeat myself, by letting circumstances defeat me. I become the underdog, fighting to survive against a world which is bigger than I can cope with. I forget that God is bigger than my problems. I know I am not alone in this struggle to feel secure and treasured; many of us grapple with the same issue.

One of the things that intrigues me about the story of David and Goliath, is that even though we know how it ends, (spoiler alert: *God wins through David's courage,) we call David the underdog. In reality, David cannot help but win, because of God's massive love for His people. I scratch my head and wonder why we label David like this, when we know the value that Isra'el has to the Lord.

Isra'el had a very special position on the Earth. *"Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Isra'el."* Exodus 19:5-6 *"I will give you peace in the land, and you will be able to sleep with no cause for fear."* Leviticus 26:6

Even with promises like these, and the many testimonies of what God had done for Isra'el since Abraham's time, Isra'el still forgot that they were a treasure to God, just as we do. [Ref. Genesis 22:15-18] By the time Goliath was threatening the nation, God's beloved people were so displaced from their faith, that they had forgotten that God was there to help fight their battles. Knowing that, David could not possibly have lost unless he was acting in disobedience to the Lord.

"David replied to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the Lord will conquer you... and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues His people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord's battle, and He will give you to us!" 1 Samuel 17:45-47

If David knew what the outcome had to be, why, three thousand years later, haven't we caught up with his thinking? It appears that we have this compulsion to label threats big and God as smaller than He is. We are no different than Isra'el, in that we let fear take over. God is poised and willing to fight for us, but we have to be reminded of that, in order to wrestle our fleshly minds back off their disaster-focussed auto-pilot.

If we place God first in all our circumstances, then we will never be an underdog. There is simply no way that can happen. Why? We are as great a treasure to the Lord as the nation of Isra'el, and God will never stop fighting for us.

"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure." Ephesians 1:3-5

"... all belong to God, whether Jew or Gentile and we are all partakers of the same divine inheritance through grace. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:12-13

So the next time something towers above you, making you quake in fear, let your Heavenly Father deal with it. You're not an underdog. There is no way you can't win.

I am going to finish by joining Paul in saying,

"I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. Then Christ will make His home in your hearts as you trust in Him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God."

"Now all glory to God, Who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to Him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen." Ephesians 3:16-21

NOTES

*Please note that I have said God wins, not that David wins, as all victories for Isra'el were won by God and the glory does not belong to any man. David agrees with me. In 2 Samuel 22:1-4 David wrote these words on the day the Lord rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul.

*"The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my Saviour;
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.
He is my shield, the power that saves me,
and my place of safety.
He is my refuge, my saviour,
the one who saves me from violence.
I called on the Lord, who is worthy of praise,
and He saved me from my enemies."*

This is a quick list of the battles the Lord won / engineered for Isra'el. Who else compares to this? Not David, not anyone. In both Isaiah 42:8 and 48:11 the Lord says, "*I will not give My glory to another.*"

- Crossing the Red Sea - Exodus 14
- Victory over the Amalekites - Exodus 17:8-16
- Promise to fight for the people - Exodus 23:27-31 and Deuteronomy 7:7-8
- Jordan River dry crossing - Joshua 3:15-16
- Fall of Jericho - Joshua 6:20-21
- Ai - Joshua 8
- Ammonites - Joshua 10:11
- North captured for Isra'el - Joshua 11:16-20, especially verse 23
- South captured for Isra'el - Joshua 10:40-42
- Deborah and Barak - Judges 4:14-15
- Gideon - Judges 7
- Samson - Judges 16, especially verse 30
- Ark of the Covenant against the Philistines - 1 Samuel 7
- Saul's first battle, against King Nahash of Ammon - 1 Samuel 11
- Jonathan against the Philistines - 1 Samuel 14
- David and Eleazar son of Dodai - 2 Samuel 23
- David and Shammah son of Agee - 2 Samuel 23
- Rescue of Judah under the leadership of the righteous King Hezekiah - 2 Kings 19



Discovering David's Most Important Task as King

Years ago I was having dinner with a friend when she told me that she had Jewish blood in the family. My instant reaction was, “*you are so lucky!*” Why? Because I knew that the Jewish people were God’s “chosen ones.” Out of all the nations, the Lord chose Abraham and then his descendants, to be the Lord’s holy, special people. I was a Christian, but I didn’t have that same status and to me, it was a far greater privilege than merely being “grafted into the vine.” [Ref. Romans 11]

As I am an adoptee, several years ago I had my DNA tested and I discovered, to my absolute delight, that my mother’s side of the family is Jewish. Beyond my wildest dreams, I too, was a “chosen one.” I am comforted by being connected to something so ancient and precious, but there was a point where I stopped and realised that being a “chosen one” isn’t any more special than being a “grafted in” Christian. What my spirituality comes down to is that I belong to Jesus. He is all I have known for thirty-five years, and all I want. Nothing I have as a Jew is as precious as my relationship with Him.

I fell down the rabbit hole of YouTube last week, and was watching a BuzzFeed **video on “11 Things Your Jewish Friends Just Get,” when they flashed up an odd title graphic: “signs your friend is a chosen one.” The social label surprised me as a statement made in Deuteronomy looked so out of place in the secular world. The surprise made me take the time to rethink about what it means to be a “chosen one.”



In Understanding the ***Old Testament, Dr Paul House says: “He has chosen Israel to be His people so that they might bless the other nations. They are not chosen so that they can have special privileges and do as they wish. They are chosen to minister to the rest of the world.” From that my mind went straight to this Scripture: “When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.” Luke 12:48b With status comes responsibilities, and looking at that verse in context reminded me of David.

In Luke 12, Jesus was talking about no one knowing when He will return and how we must be ready, but in verse 42, He makes a statement that also outlines the duties of a godly King. “*A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing His other household servants and feeding them...*” Regardless of David’s status as King, he was God’s servant. A quick search of “*My servant, David*” on Bible Hub brings up fifteen places where God has spoken of David that way. God never calls David by his worldly title. Whatever status Isra’el gave their Kings, the Great Master kept the office of King in perspective.

Dr House’s words helped me to realise that **David’s chief role as King was to make God known**, both to his people and **also to the surrounding nations**. Regardless of the national security needs of the nation, which laws needed reinforcing, what civil works needed to be completed, or what other diplomatic and administrative duties he had, first and foremost, as King he was the spiritual leader and had the responsibility of “*managing [God’s] other household servants and feeding them*” the Word of God. A righteous, obedient King would keep Isra’el on the right track with God, so that He could bless His chosen people so much, the other nations would look at their success in envy, and want to know who their God was.

God blessed David to a degree that put him in the perfect place to be a witness to other nations. As Dr House's also said "...he has a capital city, he has military might, and there is a religious centre for Israelite worship. Each of these achievements helps make him the undisputed authority in the land. For now Israel's' nagging long term problems of poor military, poor organisation and scattered religious rites have been solved. Because they have a good leader they follow Yahweh and defeat their enemies. No ruler since Joshua has done so much for the people." The other nations had to have seen this and wanted to know the secrets of such success.

"I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not hidden Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation." Psalm 40:10

David's chief task was the same one that we all have as Christians: God blesses us so we know His love, saving power and grace, which we then pass onto others who are lost, or struggling. It doesn't matter whether you are a "chosen one" or not, we have all been blessed with much and much is expected.

NOTES

- *"The Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honour; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken." Deuteronomy 26:18-19
- **Buzzfeed Video Link: <https://youtu.be/uNIcRwcNqos>
- ***Understanding the Old Testament by Dr Paul House, [biblicaltraining.org](http://www.biblicaltraining.org/understanding-old-testament/paul-house) Available free from: [https://www.biblicaltraining.org/understanding-old-testament/paul-house](http://www.biblicaltraining.org/understanding-old-testament/paul-house)
- To understand the central role that Isra'el had during David's reign, please also read What You Need to Know About Isra'el in David's Time: <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=34218>



Dancing with King David: A Reminder of How Much God Treasures Us

One of the most common reactions I've had to King David's life has been, "should he have done that?" There are areas of diplomatic strategy that have made me wonder about his motivation, and there are other areas, such as when he wore a priest's garment to serve the Lord, where I wondered if he had stepped way over the line. Was wearing an ephod an arrogant act by the man in power? Or did he have a God-given right to do that? What surprised me when I researched this topic, was how much it speaks of how much God loves us. David's dance became a reminder of what a beautiful, high status we all have in the Lord's eyes.

In our times, for a political leader to publicly put on an priest's outfit is unthinkable. Priests are called by God and especially trained for ministry. It would be offensive, but David did it.

"Now King David was told, "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets." 2 Samuel 6:12-15

Jewish society has always had a definite order which was well established and adhered to. Originally, the firstborn sons of the Hebrew families were to have been the priests set aside to serve God in the Tabernacle and lead His people. However, when the children of Isra'el built and worshipped the golden calf, (while Moses was being given the ten commandments), only the tribe of Levi did not betray God by joining in. Because of this, the Lord had Moses sanctify them as priests and *"Thus shall you set apart the Levites from the midst of the children of Israel, and the Levites shall become Mine... For they are wholly given over to Me from among the children of Israel; instead of those that open the womb all the firstborn of Israel I have taken them for Myself."* [Ref. Numbers 8:14 and 16]

Within King David's dynasty, he took an active interest in ensuring the spiritual needs of the nation were set in place. David established rosters for the Levites in 1 Chronicles chapters 23-25, prepared for the building of the temple and made God a top priority for everyone. He didn't leave all the religion stuff to the priests, as Saul and his successor did. As a Hebrew King, David acted as the spiritual head for the nation; and as we see with later Kings, his influence could lead his people away from, or towards the Lord. What confirms David's status further, is that the prophet Samuel anointed David with the same oil that was used on the High Priest. [Refs. 1 Samuel 16:13 and Exodus 30:31]

According to Rabbi Leibel Schapiro, within Jewish tradition, the king had to bow down before the Lord (in the tabernacle, and later, the temple) for much longer than anyone else, not only to keep his ego in check, but also to wait on the Lord for instructions on how to lead God's people. The Rabbi also believes that the kings were vehicles by which God's kingship could be manifest in the lives of the nation. Thus, David could guide the path of the Levites and wear an ephod to serve the Lord when he chose to. His actions were right.

The good news is, that is not the end of it. David had the right to wear an ephod, not just because he was the king and had special privileges, but simply because he was one of God's chosen people. Regardless of the date on the calendar, we have the same right. Whether Jewish or Christian, we are all called to minister to and worship the Lord, and this was God's decision which He initiated very early in Jewish history.

Exodus 19:1-6: "On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, ‘This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

This status hasn't become outdated since Jesus atoned for our sins. In 1 Peter, chapter 2, Peter says this: *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."* 1 Peter 2:9-10

Reading about David wearing that ephod reminds me that I am special to God. I am not trained or ordained, I cannot lead a congregation, but there is nothing to stop me from worship and directly accessing my Father's love and Will for me. He has never wanted there to be divisions which result in some followers having more, or less access and privilege. God's heart is one of equal generosity to all.

When you look into the commands that the Lord gave to Moses, concerning Isra'el, they are incredibly generous, and exalted God's people to a status which was the complete opposite to that which they had, had as slaves. In Numbers 15:38, the Isra'elites were told to add tassels to their garments which were died a specific blue, which is called tekhelet; an incredibly expensive product which was so costly, it was only worn by royalty and the highest ranking noblemen. It comes from a sea creature called the chillazon, and it takes many of these creatures to produce enough dye to make one thread blue.



This command of the Lord reinforced the value that God's people had in His eyes. They were to be a royal priesthood, that served and thrived under Him. Instead of living the arduous, miserable life of a slave, they were valued, provided for and adored and the exact same thing applies to us.

David's story may be about a king, but it is one which constantly teaches me where I stand with the Lord, boosts my faith and brings me closer to God. That is why I have spent so much time studying his life and I encourage you to do the same.



Getting Over (Really) Big Mistakes

Two years ago I regained consciousness in a hospital bed, realising that I had deeply traumatised the people I loved the most and that I had permanently messed up my life. No one was ever going to trust me the same way again. It was the most horrifying thing I had ever been through. I couldn't make it better; I couldn't hide what I had done wrong, as it was publicly reported. It could affect my future employment potential and could tar my reputation for a very long time.

Thankfully, we don't all go through experiences quite as dramatic, but regardless of the comparative size of the mistake made, if it feels like a destructive disaster to you, then it's big and somehow, you have to get past it. That is not easy, especially if it's had a huge, negative impact on your faith, but it can be done with patience and persistence.

David made a terrible mistake before he became the King of Judah. In 1 Samuel 26:17-21 we see the toll that Saul's relentless pursuit of David had taken.

"Saul recognized David's voice and called out, "Is that you, my son David?"

And David replied, "Yes, my Lord the king. Why are you chasing me? What have I done?

What is my crime? But now let my Lord the king listen to his servant. If the Lord has stirred you up against me, then let him accept my offering. But if this is simply a human scheme, then may those involved be cursed by the Lord. For they have driven me from my home, so I can no longer live among the Lord's people, and they have said, 'Go, worship pagan gods.' Must I die on foreign soil, far from the presence of the Lord? Why has the king of Israel come out to search for a single flea? Why does he hunt me down like a partridge on the mountains?"

Then Saul confessed, "I have sinned. Come back home, my son, and I will no longer try to harm you, for you valued my life today. I have been a fool and very, very wrong."

Despite Saul's confession, he continued to deploy both his time and his army to try and kill David, his rival to the throne of Isra'el. After years of this, an exhausted David fled to the Philistine city of Gath for sanctuary, where he knew Saul wouldn't dare to follow him.

To summarise David's time in Gath, to survive he repeatedly lied to the King of Gath; he raided the people living between Gath and Egypt's borders to ensure the survival and wealth of his family and his men, and in those raids he killed every man, woman and child to ensure there would be no survivors to dob him in; then he wound up being marched into battle against his own people. David had been leading a precarious double life. The Lord saved him from fighting his own kinsmen, but many scholars believe that it is at least partly because of the atrocities that David committed at this time, that he never got his heart's desire, to build a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant.

The young David was still building his faith and learning to tame his tongue and his character. From earlier events, we've seen that David was a popular, charismatic leader who could talk his way out of incredibly tight situations. [Ref. 1 Samuel 24:7 and later 1 Samuel 30:6] He was also battling with keeping his temper under control and learning how to be a righteous leader. [Ref. 1 Samuel 29] The fact that he had two wives by this stage (three if you count the exiled Michal,) shows that he was already acting like a man in power and that could easily lead to corruption. Yet, God was using that tough time in exile to build dependence on Him, and to shear off rough edges which could potentially become massive stumbling blocks, had they not been dealt with.

At that time David was also surrounded by several hundred men who maybe weren't the most godly of influences. *"Then others began coming; men who were in trouble or in debt or who were just discontented, until David was the captain of about 400 men."* 1 Samuel 22:2 Perhaps their complaints and suggestions had contributed to him stepping away from having faith in God's deliverance and escaping over the border?

Despite how badly he'd messed up and how tragic the consequences could have been, there is one thing which saved David from disaster: he always turned to his faith in the Lord.

We see it demonstrated in 1 Samuel 30:3-7:

"When David and his men saw the ruins and realised what had happened to their families, they wept until they could weep no more. David's two wives, Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal from Carmel, were among those captured. David was now in great danger because all his men were very bitter about losing their sons and daughters, and they began to talk of stoning him. But David found strength in the Lord his God. Then he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring me the ephod!" So Abiathar brought it. Then David asked the Lord, "Should I chase after this band of raiders? Will I catch them?" And the Lord told him, "Yes, go after them. You will surely recover everything that was taken from you!"

This faith always stayed with David and is what kept him from becoming an unrighteous, power-crazed mess as a King, throughout the rest of his life. During the time he was in Gath, his faith would have been pushed to its limits, as the Israelites believed that if they were outside of the borders of their country, God could not reach them. As the Scripture above demonstrates, David believed that within Philistine territory, they were estranged from His delivering power. That a man of God was willing to take that risk and move to Gath shows his desperation. David's mind must have been blown when he discovered that it didn't matter where he was, or what he'd done, God was with him! It defied everything he'd been taught and must have been a joyful, humbling realisation.

There are two lessons from David's experience which can help us get through the gigantic mistakes we've made in our own lives, regardless of how great the mess is. The first is get back to the basics of your faith. Get back to prayer, studying the Word of God and asking for help and obeying His lead. You don't need to engage in any fancy acts of faith, pushing yourself into deeper waters than you feel you can swim in; just get back to a child-like dependence on Him, where you are secure and allow God to build you up again over time.

The second is, listen to the council of righteous people. David had the son of Isra'el's high priest with him. Abiathar must have been an encouragement and support. In times of great need, we need to be around other Christians with strong faith, who will pray and help us find out how the Word of God applies to our life. The answers are not found in the bottom of a bottle, self-pity or escapism. Spending hours online or watching television won't assist us: we need good, solid, reliable input from the Christians in our lives that we know have also gone through hard times and overcome them. Saul had killed Abiathar's family, so he was in the same precarious boat as David; but he still had the Ephod the priests wore; he hadn't thrown away his faith either.

David got through this trial and more, and in his old age, wanted to keep exhorting the next generation of young people to serve God. In Psalm 71, even as a King, his enemies are still after him, wanting his power, but despite a life of hardship, in verses 7 and 8, David says this:

*"My life is an example to many,
because You have been my strength and protection.
That is why I can never stop praising You;
I declare Your glory all day long."*

Life can be a very long haul, filled with many trials and heartaches, but there will also be many occasions of victory and praise. I encourage you, whatever you are going through, to hold onto your faith, even when you're in a place where you're sure God can't reach you. He will push through; just go back to the basics and pray study and praise your way through. You'll be stunned at what His faithfulness will deliver for you.



How We Can Use Goliath's Sword

"Power does not corrupt. Fear corrupts. Perhaps the fear of a loss of power."
John Steinbeck

It is easier to rule by intimidation and violence, than by humility and faith. Yet, despite many threats to David's life and kingship, he never turned into an aggression-driven tyrant. David's attitude was this:

*"I wait quietly before God,
for my victory comes from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will never be shaken.
So many enemies against one man—
all of them trying to kill me." Psalm 62:1-3a*

However, this lesson in trust was not learned early. It only became a life choice of David's after Saul's initial attempts to kill him. Like all of us, David resorted to fleshly methods of coping first, then developed a greater faith the hard way.

When Saul fully gave full vent to his jealousy and paranoia about David, David fled first to the prophet Samuel, seeking refuge and guidance. Word of David's location reached Saul, and after miraculous deliverance, David had to run again. He sought out Jonathan for answers and when Jonathan confirmed Saul's determination to see David dead, he again fled and did something that an older David would find unpalatable. [Full story refs: 1 Samuel 19-21]

Firstly, he lied to the high priest who looked after the Tabernacle. David obtained holy bread which he had no right to touch. Secondly, he headed straight for a weapon: he demanded the return of Goliath's sword from the priest. *"There is nothing like it!" David replied. "Give it to me!"* [Ref: 1 Samuel 21:9b] That is a very emphatic request. There is nothing faith-reliant, or humble about it, and I suspect that the main reason that David went to the Tabernacle, is neither for bread or spiritual guidance, (he'd already met with Samuel), but to get that sword. (** See an in-depth analysis in the footnotes.)

That doesn't sound like David. What happened to:

*"But when I am afraid,
I will put my trust in You.
I praise God for what He has promised.
I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?" Psalm 56:3-4/11*

It wasn't built into him yet.

David should have been in trouble with the Lord for taking the bread and possibly, also for taking the sword, however, the grace of God intervenes in this part of his story. The Lord uses this awful incident to help David survive to become King. God allowed David both the bread and the sword without penalty, as he and his men had to eat, and David would have to defend himself from many threats in the wilderness, he'd face in the years to come. As the sword and bread was God's, it was also His to give and use as He desired. [Ref: 1 Samuel 21]

I am basing this on Jesus' own discussion of this issue in Mark 2:25-26 *"He [Jesus] answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then he said to*

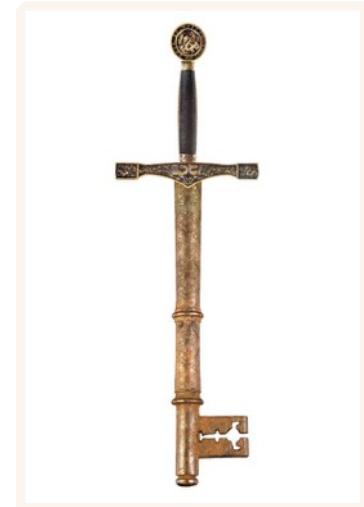
them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (The Law helps people, people aren't to be enslaved by it.)

God provided, regardless of His Law.

So now we have a terrified David. He runs for safety to Gath, a *large Philistine city, close to the borders of Judah, where Saul and his men won't follow; but he is recognised and has to retreat yet again. To run to an enemy you have repeatedly fought against is an incredibly desperate, fear-fuelled act. It says a great deal about David's frame of mind.

To escape the wrath of Saul, David's family also has had to abandon their property and livelihood, and join David in hiding. He gets his ageing parents to safety through the family's **ties in Moab, and he is left in mortal danger, with only a group of fellow renegades, his brothers and... Goliath's sword.

Put yourself in David's shoes. Everything has blown up out of control and rectifying it is far beyond his control. David probably knew why Saul had turned on him and feels acutely persecuted. He has never tried to seize power from Saul and is blameless, homeless and grieving his separation from his wife, Michal, (who he must have been worried about, knowing Saul's temper, and because she'd risked her life to save him.) A significant number of innocent people are dead or suffering, and it's all because of him. All David has is his faith and that sword. Symbolically, what would this sword have meant to David?



This treasure had to be a symbol of hope and encouragement. It would represent:

1. God's proven intention to deliver Isra'el from her enemies, and maybe David from his;
2. it was a sign of God's favour and honour on David's life;
3. it was a promise of Kingship to come, as it was a king's grade weapon; and
4. it was a means of violent defence.

With David's full history in mind, Goliath's sword teaches me two lessons that I can apply to my own life.

1. Remember what God has done in our lives.

"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." Deuteronomy 4:9

This is a traditional approach set down first by Moses, then repeated by the Psalmist, Asaph, as he reminds the people of his era to remember God's deeds in Psalm 78. David does this also, in obedience to Moses, in Psalms such as Psalm 66. A publicly sung Psalm would enable the goodness of God to become a testimony and source of empowerment to everyone who heard it.

*"Come and see what our God has done,
what awesome miracles He performs for people!
He made a dry path through the Red Sea,
and His people went across on foot.
There we rejoiced in Him.
For by His great power He rules forever.
He watches every movement of the nations;
let no rebel rise in defiance."* Psalm 66:5-7

Whatever the Lord has done in your life, keep it by your side, like a sword, as a reminder of God's provision and love for you. Write it down, or keep a souvenir, so you remember that testimony. It will help you in the future.

2. When desperate or hurting, never let your actions be tinged with regret

David's visit to the priests at Nob had catastrophic consequences. They were killed by Saul for helping, which devastated David. As long as he carried Goliath's sword, as useful and encouraging as that symbol would have been, he would also be carrying a reminder of those deaths, his lies and his lack of faith. It is possible that this tragedy is part of what taught David to look for the Lord for deliverance, rather than first reaching for a weapon to defend himself with.

In all things, no matter how stressed we are, it's far better to act in the best character we can muster, so we don't look back with regret, or weep over the bridges we have burnt behind us. Don't become aggressive when you're backed into corners; whether that's through words you will later regret, bitterness, or any action that is unrighteous.

It's easy to grasp any tool to make yourself feel safer in a time of desperation, just slow down and try and ensure that you're reaching for the right one.

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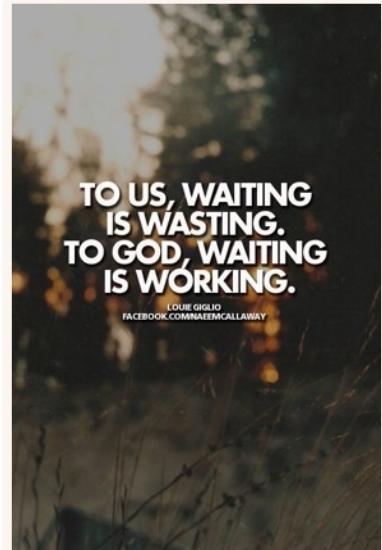
- Please see "By Heart or By Sword" for further explanation on David not using violence for deliverance. <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32075>
- * This is based on recent archaeological findings. Gath is thought to have been around eight times larger than David's Jerusalem, and would have been a logical hiding place.
- ** David's family ties were via his grandmother, Ruth, from the book of Ruth.
- *** To understand this part of David's story properly, you need to understand the circumstances surrounding the sword. For example, why wasn't it with David in the first place? As part of the spoils of war, Goliath's sword was rightfully David's and Saul did not take it as his own. Goliath's sword was a huge, heavy piece of iron, in days when apart from King Saul and his Crown Prince, Jonathan, no one throughout Isra'el had iron weapons at all. [Ref: 1 Samuel 13:19-22] Even though David had headed Saul's army, maybe he wasn't entitled to carry a weapon of such a high calibre? That privilege may only have belonged to the King, and David was a humble servant, who would not have kept a better weapon for himself, than the King had.
- As the sword was located in a sacred place, behind the ephod in the Tabernacle where God was worshipped, I wonder if David had surrendered it to the Lord as an offering? It was his first victory and it appears that he knew where the sword was. The location of the sword would not have kept it safe from raiding Philistines, so if it was an offering, did David have the right to take it back? Especially as at the same time, David was also given the holy bread that had sat in the Tabernacle as an offering to the Lord, and was strictly only for the priests consumption, under the Laws God gave the people through Moses. The bread was to help feed the priests. Taking that bread, was like taking part of someone's wages and should not have happened. This is complex and I don't have all the answers. I have studied and debated this long and hard and this is the best I can figure out. I could be completely off track. What do you think?

THE SPIRITUALLY MATURE DAVID'S ATTITUDE TO DELIVERANCE

*"Be still in the presence of the Lord,
and wait patiently for Him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.
Stop being angry!
Turn from your rage!
Do not lose your temper—
it only leads to harm.
For the wicked will be destroyed,
but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land."*
Psalm 37:7-9

*"Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.
My victory and honour come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.
O my people, trust in Him at all times.
Pour out your heart to Him,
for God is our refuge." Psalm 62:5-8 (Cross reference Psalm 131:2)*

*"Lord, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing.
You guard all that is mine.
The land You have given me is a pleasant land.
What a wonderful inheritance!" Psalm 16:5-8*



Hidden Sins

Sin is one of those areas that we prefer to avoid dealing with, unless something we have done wrong is staring us in the face, and has to be dealt with. One of David's traits that I admire is his habit of asking God to show him where he is messing up. He does it with a thoroughness that puts me to shame.

*"How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?
Cleanse me from these hidden faults.
Keep your servant from deliberate sins! (or presumptuous sins)
Don't let them control me.
Then I will be free of guilt
and innocent of great sin.
May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."* Psalm 19:12-14

This is one of the many times where I wish I knew far more about David than I do. In the era that David lived in, the people who had chosen to worship gods in addition to Yahweh, lived in fear of doing something to upset them. This practice goes back several thousand years before David, and as he was living around people with that deeply ingrained cultural mindset, could it have also have made him concerned with making a bad move he wasn't aware of, and disappointing Yahweh? Or was his behaviour entirely based on the Torah? I won't be able to find that answer, but regardless, his attitude is a valuable example for us.

The New English Translation Bible puts the wording "hidden faults" this way: "*Who can know all his errors?
Please do not punish me for sins I am unaware of.*" Pagans, or polytheists, believed that if you were sick or going through some kind of calamity, whether it be personally, or as a tribal or city unit, you had to have angered the gods by doing something wrong. It didn't matter if you didn't know you were doing wrong, if you didn't make the grade, you paid. Mankind was thought to be created to serve the gods as slaves: "*Man shall be charged with the service of the gods, that they might be at ease.*" Slaves dare not disobey.



David was in a covenant relationship with God and carefully followed the laws which God had set down via Moses. He would have given God a weekly burnt offering, which would have served as a constant reminder of his sinful state; plus David must have never forgotten that Saul lost his Kingship because of disobedience. "*You have preserved my life because I am innocent; you have brought me into your presence forever.*" Psalm 41:12

In addition to that, David's attitude was heavily influenced by living in a world where judgement for sin was carried out during your life. There was no belief that you were either punished or blessed in the afterlife for what you have done. The accounts were settled now, so you had to be far more careful about what you did.

*"O Lord, don't rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your rage.
Return, O Lord, and rescue me.
Save me because of Your unfailing love."*

*For the dead do not remember You.
Who can praise You from the grave?" Psalm 6:1, then 4-5*

*"O Lord my God, if I have done wrong
or am guilty of injustice,
if I have betrayed a friend
or plundered my enemy without cause,
then let my enemies capture me.
Let them trample me into the ground
and drag my honour in the dust." Psalm 7:3-5*

So what does this mean for us? It's a reminder to be aware of the full extent of our failings. We can sin deliberately, or without meaning to do so, or without knowing that we have; but bless God, there is grace for all of these errors, we simply need to remember to prayerfully cover all those bases. It is a wise move to do as David did and ask God to show us where we have been wrong and yes, that takes courage! But ensuring we are as holy as we can be, and the resulting benefit of getting closer to God, makes that step of bravery worth it!

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if any wicked way is in me; and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23-24



How David Compares to Other Near Eastern Kings

God changes everything in people's lives. He always has, He always will. Last year I began to dig back through ancient history to find out what the kings in David's era and part of the world were like. I wanted to know where the corruption that comes with royalty stemmed from. The search took me back far further than I had anticipated and I was stunned to know so much of the culture was still relevant and active in David's lifetime.

The roots of kingship go back to the first city states which sprung up in Mesopotamia, where people decided to group together and organise to make survival easier: and of course, someone grabbed power. We don't know who the first "king" was. They could have been a reputed warrior, a respected priest or someone who was simply savvy enough to take the opportunity to be the guy in charge. You know the deal. It doesn't matter how many thousands of years have gone past, (estimated to be six thousand by historians,) it's still a man in a fancier hat with a better house, servants and loads more money than everyone else. Kingship has been synonymous with excess and abuses of power since the beginning not because people tend to be a little jealous, but because that is the way things really are.

When kings first came in society changed. The power stopped being in the hands of the people, or a democratic committee of people. Women started to be treated as lesser beings and the class system was "invented" where some had more and some had less, rather than everyone working towards survival. God gave His people a command from the beginning of time: "*go forth and multiply.*" [Ref. Genesis 9:7] We were never meant to be clustered together in unhealthy cities with a class and sexist divide which shoves God out of the picture. For the sake of an easier life, our ancestors gave that up and nothing has really changed. We are still suspicious of the number 13, we still exalt people into insane positions of wealth and power, and humanity leans away from the freedom that God wanted for us, creating social problems, mental illness and all manner of physical sickness.

By the time I got to David, three thousand years later, I was mortified to see the same system being maintained and concerned at the similarities between paganism and How Israel functioned. For example, the kings were always placed in power by their deity, the altars had horns, and the priests needs were catered for the same way. There were a lot of parallels where the base culture that had produced Abraham had stuck in people's minds and had gone through very little modification; the gods were basically the same; no one had grown. The whole structure of society was essentially a corruption of what God had intended.

As I said above, God changes everything in people's lives. He always has, He always will and He did that with David. Saul bought straight into the culturally accepted, corrupt mode of kingship, and David did follow that to a significant degree, but he was different. David had been bought up strong in the faith and he doggedly stayed on that path, despite being exiled from fellowship and access to Israel's worship practices by Saul. [Ref. 1 Samuel 26:19-20] He followed the laws in the Torah which God had handed down through Moses, and this made him distinct from any other king. He was so distinct that it's given historians a reason to doubt he ever existed, as he didn't leave the usual marks of kingship behind for us to find.

The biggest thing a king did in the ancient Near East was build a temple. Now David did that, but not in the same way. Normally when a Near Eastern king came into power, they set up their own capital city regardless of what already existed (he did that); named it after them (he didn't do that); then build yet another temple to their god to show what a devout, god-chosen leader they were. No temple existed in Israel until David decided that his living large while God dwelled in a tent was just not right. Why? Saul was not a man of religious fervour, to put it mildly. It is doubtful he would have weighed up the difference between his home and God's and decided to put the situation right. God had asked Moses to build the tabernacle, which was a nice tent situation, so that would do. It takes

a different heart to choose not to live in greater splendour than the One to whom you owe you life, your success and your future. David had that humble heart that cared about His creator.

David's humility also kept him from following in some of the other time-worn customs of kings. Yes, he did accumulate wives like other kings, which was against the law and had consequences which he regretted deeply. He did grab the King of Rabbah's elaborate crown for himself... but he did not sing his own praises from the palace roof. Yes, of course he would have succumbed to ego on occasion. When even your wives bow and scrape before you, the human brain is going to go places it should not venture, and you'll have a tough time staying humble. But David was undeniably modest compared to a typical king. [Ref. Rabbah 2 Samuel 12:29-30]

Other kings had elaborate stele (victory memorials), and/or commemorative orthostats (carved scenes on the walls) in their palace, telling everyone who visited how they had won wars, taken slaves and been the best of the best: a powerful man that you don't mess with. David did none of this. Stele's nearly always had their god carved into the picture in close proximity to the king to reinforce the idea that the king was chosen, blessed and victorious because of their god. It is the kind of idol imagery which is forbidden in the ten commandments and that may have been one reason why David didn't do it. He recorded his life events through Psalms, some of which are like victory steles, others which are cries for help, but nothing else has been discovered. We have ancient Babylonian and Assyrian statues and orthostats which pre-date David, but nothing has been found of his as it appears, it just wasn't his thing. Yes, it could have been destroyed when Jerusalem was sacked by Babylon; but there is no Biblical account of any such objects being made, even though we know which of his great-grandsons thought it would be fashionable to paint the palace walls red.

Read the Psalms: "*I will tell of the marvellous things You have done.*" Psalm 9:1b and "*I will exalt You Lord, because You have rescued me.*" Psalm 30 David never takes the glory for himself, he always gives it to God. It would be completely incongruent to his character to build memorials to himself for what God had done.

David was also humble in the empire department. When kings traditionally went on campaign each spring to expand their control, we find David staying at home in Jerusalem while Joab gets on with the security-related tasks. [Ref. 2 Samuel 11:1, Joab was dealing with the aftermath of 2 Samuel 10.] He dealt with the enemies of Israel, but he didn't get ambitious beyond that. It was common for kings to start expanding their territory just because they could. David didn't. It's that simple. The Lord had said, "*I gave you your master's house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more.*" 2 Samuel 12:8 It looks like David simply did not ask God for me. He was satisfied with a secure nation and the blessing he had. Psalm 34:14 says "*seek peace and work to maintain it.*" Taking this general attitude and his habit of not joining Joab on the battlefield unless it was absolutely necessary, it appears David was simply not a war-mongering conquerer.

He didn't give himself a grandiose title or nickname either. King Lugal-zaggisi of Sumer claimed that he ruled the four quarters of the world, even though he was only the ruler of the neighbouring regions of Sumer and Akkad. Etana, King of Kish, called himself "the shepherd, who ascended to heaven and consolidated all the foreign countries." En-me-barage-si, also of Kish, referred to himself as the one: "who made the land of Elam submit," and Kubaba, the only female king, called herself: "the woman tavern-keeper, who made firm the foundations of Kish." David once referred to himself as the "sweet singer of Israel," but it was it.

I have often called David the anti-king because of his humility, but the glory doesn't even go to him for achieving that. While it was his choice to be open to the leading and correction of the Holy Spirit, at the end of the day, it was God's work in David which turned him into the awesome man he became. As many have said, David was the start of an era and the end of that era... and that era was planned and put into place by his God, YHWH, who did this not just for David, He did it for all of His people. God changes everything in people's lives. He always has, He always will. ☩

How David Would Want to be Remembered

There is a simple answer to this question - David would want his life to do one thing: point the way to God.

Unlike his son, Absalom, King David never built a monument to himself. [2 Samuel 18:18 despite 2 Samuel 14:27] He never asked that the temple be named after him, or for Solomon to have a plaque installed on the wall with his name on it. He did not leave behind golden, ostentatious palaces, as his son Solomon did [1 Kings 10:21]; neither did he build himself an impressive funerary monument as the Egyptian kings did. Instead, this is what we hear David saying in his old age.

**"My life is an example to many,
because You have been my strength and protection.**
*That is why I can never stop praising You;
I declare Your glory all day long...
But I will keep on hoping for Your help;
I will praise You more and more.
I will tell everyone about Your righteousness.
All day long I will proclaim Your saving power,
though I am not skilled with words.
I will praise Your mighty deeds, O Sovereign Lord.
I will tell everyone that You alone are just.
O God, You have taught me from my earliest childhood,
and I constantly tell others about the wonderful things You do.
Now that I am old and grey,
do not abandon me, O God.
Let me proclaim Your power to this new generation,
Your mighty miracles to all who come after me.
Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the highest
heavens.
You have done such wonderful things.
Who can compare with You, O God?
You have allowed me to suffer much hardship,
but You will restore me to life again
and lift me up from the depths of the earth.
You will restore me to even greater honour
and comfort me once again.
Then I will praise You with music on the harp,
because You are faithful to your promises, O my God.
I will sing praises to You with a lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.
I will shout for joy and sing Your praises,
for You have ransomed me.
I will tell about Your righteous deeds
all day long,
for everyone who tried to hurt me
has been shamed and humiliated." Psalm 71:7-8, then 14-24*



In his last words (below), David focusses not on his military prowess, or his leadership achievements, instead he states the blessing that the Lord has bestowed upon him.** This is typical of David. When he talked about his achievements, it was always alongside what God had done; and despite the extensive suffering and loss he had been through, there was no bitterness, complaint, or resentment present.

David's Last Words

"These are the last words of David:
David, the son of Jesse, speaks:
David, the man who was raised up so high,
David, the man anointed by the God of Jacob,
David, the sweet psalmist of Isra'el.

"The Spirit of the Lord speaks through me;
His words are upon my tongue.
The God of Israel spoke.
The Rock of Israel said to me:
'The one who rules righteously,
who rules in the fear of God,
is like the light of morning at sunrise,
like a morning without clouds,
like the gleaming of the sun
on new grass after rain.'
"Is it not my family God has chosen?
Yes, He has made an everlasting covenant with me.
His agreement is arranged and guaranteed in every detail.
He will ensure my safety and success.
But the godless are like thorns to be thrown away,
for they tear the hand that touches them.
One must use iron tools to chop them down;
they will be totally consumed by fire." 1 Samuel 23

In 2 Samuel 22, he gives a greater list of what has happened in his life, and note that the glory always goes back to God. For example:

"The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my saviour;
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.
He is my shield, the power that saves me,
and my place of safety.
He is my refuge, my Saviour,
the One who saves me from violence.
I called on the Lord, who is worthy of praise,
and **He saved** me from my enemies."

NOTES

** If it seems egotistical in some ways, remember that David lived in a shame/honour culture, where a king who has been shamed is discredited and thrown out of office by his people, so culturally, it is necessary to state how he is honourable and honoured. However, David wrote much more extolling the glory of the Lord. Please see my master list of verses which demonstrate David's humility. <https://www.facebook.com/notes/from-despair-to-deliverance/verses-which-demonstrate-davids-humility/1213522105331651>



"How Long?" When Answers to Prayer Don't Seem to Arrive

"O Lord, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in trouble?"
Psalm 10:1

One morning, as I was sick and faced with a scary, roulette wheel decision on which medication would or wouldn't work, I felt exactly like David did in Psalm 6. Worn out, scared and hopeless. I prayed for wisdom and no answer came. Feeling desperate I thought, "well, if David didn't always receive answers when he so desperately needed it, then there's no hope for me to get one." I don't even begin to compare with the honour David has in the Lord's eyes, but to my surprise, God answered me. A calm voice said, "sometimes I can't give answers."

I survived the problem without damage and began to explore why God couldn't answer. The more I thought about it, the simpler the answer was... then the more complex it became. "How long" is a God-sized issue with a God-sized answer! There are so many factors which may stop His answering us in the manner we want:

- God won't stomp on our free will;
- His actions are stopping us from being greedy or stupid in some way;
- the timing is wrong;
- we need this to grow;
- there is a better plan in God's heart, than the rescue we long for;
- other's free will's hijacks or affects us and God can't override that; or
- to get to the right answer involves multiple decisions and/or steps, which have to be done in the right way, in the right time. We can't just jump to a final result and lastly,
- we have to learn obedience to the Lord: He doesn't come when we call, it's the other way around. (This is probably one of the reasons David had frequent trouble getting answers, he had to learn which King had the highest status and that he had to wait on God, God could not be summoned to him.)

If you were to chart the whole path of any event, particularly those involving more than one person, your brain would spin. There is too much information. Overload and confusion would be imminent. Thankfully, God takes care of all the behind the scenes issues, that we can't handle. We can't access the full data which He plans with and we shouldn't try to.

Putting this issue simply, firstly the Lord has to allow us free will. He aids and comforts us as much as possible, (or as much as He is able to help our stubborn heads and hearts;) but we are meant to stand on our own two feet and grow up. We have to make our own choices and mistakes. So that is one reason why He may abstain from an instant, heroic rescue. If He stepped in too often and gave us every answer, we'd soon complain about losing our rights, being treated like incapable children, or not being given space to grow.

Secondly, behind the scenes are many complex factors that influence His ability to answer. There may be a simple solution, but if we are told it at the wrong time, then it would fail. As I said above, getting to the point where the answer is effective may take multiple decisions, a series of steps, timing, and/or changes made by other parties (who also have their own free wills.) This is where the complexity really kicks in.

Thirdly, what God is doing can be incredibly obvious, we are just too anxious or biased towards our desires, to see it.

When we get stressed, we see only one factor: our need and how long it's taking to meet it. All the machinations of what's happening in the background, from all sides... and what God really is doing to effectively deal with it, is safely hidden from us. Please note the word safely.

Life has enough troubles. Bless God that He has set limits on what we have to deal with.

God knows the answers to every problem in an instant; technically, before it even happened. He knows where you need help the most and will be working on the very best possible answer, you just can't see it. So we stress out, as David did many times.

*"O Lord, do not stay far away!
You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!" Psalm 22:19*

So next time you feel abandoned by the Lord, remember, what is happening in the background would probably confuse you and create additional headaches. Apparent silence should never be taken to imply indifference. It is a matter of timing, God making the most of the best choices and acting with loving care.

Take your worries to the Lord, ask for His lead in what to do and let Him take control (within the free will boundaries He has set). He'll move all the pieces into place that He can and do a better job than you expect. Then you will be able to join David in saying,

"In panic I cried out, "I am cut off from the Lord!" But You heard my cry for mercy and answered my call for help." Psalm 31:22

ADDITIONAL "HOW LONG" PSALM MOMENTS - YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

1. *"O Lord, how long will You forget me? Forever?
How long will You look the other way?
How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul,
with sorrow in my heart every day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?
Turn and answer me, O Lord my God!
Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.
Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, "We have defeated
him!"
Don't let them rejoice at my downfall.
But I trust in Your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because You have rescued me.
I will sing to the Lord
because He is good to me." Psalm 13*

2. *"How long, O Lord, will You look on and do nothing?
Rescue me from their fierce attacks.
Protect my life from these lions!
Then I will thank You in front of the great assembly.
I will praise You before all the people.
Don't let my treacherous enemies rejoice over my defeat.
Don't let those who hate me without cause gloat over my sorrow.
They don't talk of peace;
they plot against innocent people who mind their own business.
They shout, "Aha! Aha!
With our own eyes we saw him do it!"*

.OST WAITING EMPTY DIRT)
HOPING WHERE RESTORED
ALIENATED FULFILLED CLE
POWERLESS ARE HOLLOW
RUINED TRAPPED ANXIOUS
SAFE YOU FRUSTRATED OU
REJECTED ACCEPTED HOME
VALUED ? LONELY DEFEATE
ADDICTED ASHAMED FOUND

*O Lord, You know all about this.
Do not stay silent.
Do not abandon me now, O Lord." Psalm 35:17-22*

*3. "Have compassion on me, Lord, for I am weak.
Heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.
I am sick at heart.
How long, O Lord, until You restore me?
Return, O Lord, and rescue me.
Save me because of Your unfailing love." Psalm 6:2-3*



How to Control King-Sized Egos: The Examples of David and Moses

Despite his heroic feats, David is the opposite of a Hollywood action hero. He is more the anti-hero; the guy who doesn't rely solely on his own power to be the victor, and walks away humble. If anything, the Lord was his stunt man, director, producer and all the credit went to Him.

David never made the mistake of many kings in that he didn't turn arrogant or cocky for long. The simple truth is, God never allowed him to. Throughout his entire life, David went through life-threatening trial after trial after trial, and suffered in the face of poorly, if not completely undisguised opposition.

- Saul wanting him dead out of jealousy, and because he realised David would be the next king. 1 Samuel 18:5-8
- The guilt of the death of the priests of Nob being on his head, as he'd gone to them when on the run from Saul, then lied. 1 Samuel 22
- Illness which hit him mid-life bought humiliation. 2 Samuel 21:15 (Probably diabetes.)
- The challenge of others, such as his son, Absalom, sabotaging his authority and wanting his throne. 2 Samuel 15-18 and Psalms such as Psalm 38:12-15
- Problems with Isra'el being weary of war and wanting a better deal economically. Psalm 4:6
- Guilt over his sin with Bathsheba, the murder of Uriah and resulting death of his baby son. 2 Samuel 12
- Conflicts between his tribe, Judah, and the other northern tribes, who felt he'd favoured Judah, and thus attempted to overthrow him. 2 Samuel 20
- Gut wrenching mistakes such as the Census, which cost many lives. 2 Samuel 24

That is enough to crush many people and it is guaranteed to produce deep humility. You can win many battles and take many wives to prove your status, but when your life is under threat and you're dependent on God for deliverance, it's really hard to get a big head. David never dug himself out of danger. He relied on God, not his ability as a warrior, then he gave the full glory to God.

*"I will praise You, Lord, with all my heart;
I will tell of all the marvellous things You have done.
I will be filled with joy because of You.
I will sing praises to Your Name, O Most High.
My enemies retreated;
they staggered and died when You appeared."* Psalm 9:1-3



David's humility is also seen in repeated requests to have God judge him, in order that he would stay on the right path.

*"How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?
Cleanse me from these hidden faults.
Keep your servant from deliberate sins!
Don't let them control me.
Then I will be free of guilt
and innocent of great sin.
May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,"*

O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." Psalm 19:12-14

Another point to consider is that kings are used to people obeying them. It is easy to become accustomed to bowing and obedience and make the mistake of treating God in the same way: "I ask for help, You give it when I want it." It is possible that some of the "how long" times which David experienced, were God letting David know that He would not be at the beck and call of a king. God is sovereign and above the reign of mankind. Making David wait would reinforce the correct order and again, keep a royal ego under control.

Moses has a similar story. Despite the status he was given in order to lead Isra'el out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, he was very well grounded. *Numbers 12:3 tells us:* "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." Twice, God offered to wipe out Isra'el's rebellious tribes, and give the covenant promise to Moses and his descendants. Twice Moses refused, to honour God's reputation before the whole earth, and to save the nation he loved. [Ref. Exodus 32:9-10 and Numbers 14:11-12]

In contrast to movies such as The Prince of Egypt, which portray his story, Moses life in Pharaoh's court appears to me, not to have been easy. He knew he was a Hebrew and was so angered by the treatment of his people, he killed an Egyptian that was mistreating a Hebrew slave and had to flee. Pharaoh didn't save his precious boy, Moses. He had nowhere to run for preferential treatment.

It is debatable as to whether Moses ever fit into the royal household, or whether he always felt like an outsider. Unless his speech impediment had a physical cause, that kind of insecurity and turmoil could have caused his stuttering; (which oddly, is never mentioned after the Israelites leave Egypt.) He was hesitant to approach Pharaoh to ask for the release of the Hebrew slaves, which also indicates that he knew he would not be treated like a long-lost adopted son. Tough lives develop character and few had it as abundantly as Moses did. Thank God both Moses and David did stay humble. Many millennia later, we are still benefitting from their achievements and example.

So next time life gets you down and appears to be falling apart, take heart. Maybe God is allowing your pain to keep you humble and gentle as well. Neither David or Moses were likely candidates to become the leader of a nation. You never know where the Lord will take you.

*"My heart is confident in You, O God;
no wonder I can sing Your praises with all my heart!" Psalm 108:1*



How to Kill Giants:

Searching for the Deep Secrets Behind King David's Success

A friend sent me a link to a sermon on "how to kill giants" and as I watched the sermon on David and Goliath, I thought about how many times I have heard that story preached. We all love David as a hero and want to follow in his footsteps.

There are many aspects to David's life, but the ones I find mentioned the least often, are those which involve suffering, or spiritual discipline; yet, this is what we need to hear about the most. It's the hard times and good habits that hold the real secrets to David's spiritual and earthly success. Unless we, like David, are willing to take the harder paths through life, we will not be able to slay the giants in our lives. There are no shortcuts.

David appears to be a paradoxical figure. He had all the power and wealth of a king, yet was a gentle, kind-hearted, humble man. He didn't throw his weight around, slaughter every enemy, or put his own welfare as his greatest priority. He cared about the Lord and the people he led. I describe David as an anti-king, as he doesn't fit our ideas of what royalty is like. He's both Rambo and St Francis of Assisi combined: the warring hero who wants to be a channel of God's peace.

It has taken me months to understand how these potentially opposing sides of his character work. I have found there are several threads which bind these two disparate parts together into a healthy, concrete whole.

1. His obedience to the Torah, (God's laws as handed down through Moses) which explains his warrior motivation;
2. His submission to God through prayer and seeking the Lord's will, which makes him more like St Francis; (and is of course, followed by obedience, or he would have been just another failed king.)

David's passionate devotion to the Lord was his greatest asset. It led him to not simply stick to the law and hope that everything would work out. [Ref. 1 Kings 15:5 and Psalm 40:8] He maintained a God-first, disciplined, active relationship with the Lord. David never tried to achieve the success of the kingdom himself... no matter how great his reputation was. He knew Who had trained him to lead men and Who had built his Kingdom and military success. David had the sense to stick close to his God, no matter how powerful he'd become, also ensuring that Yahweh was given the full glory due, for all of his victories and blessings.*

The only recorded instances of David not seeking God, are when he fled into Philistine territory when pursued by Saul; when he sinned with Bathsheba and should have sought mercy very quickly; and when he called for a census. Those bad decisions were all fuelled by fear. Every other time, he went to the Lord, or to a reliable prophet for advice first. Considering that David's time as King spanned forty years, that is an impressive success record.

"In the course of time, David inquired of the Lord. "Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" he asked.

The Lord said, "Go up."

David asked, "Where shall I go?"

"To Hebron," the Lord answered.

So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns. Then the men of Judah came to Hebron, and there they anointed David king over the tribe of Judah." 2 Samuel 2:1-4

A number of Bible scholars have noted that absolute power is a dangerous thing. When a king doesn't have to answer to anyone, they frequently become dangerous; but David chose to be

readily answerable to the Lord. That saved him for sliding down the same path ego-driven, godless of Solomon and sadly, most of his successors.

*"How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?
Cleanse me from these hidden faults.
Keep your servant from deliberate sins!
Don't let them control me.
Then I will be free of guilt
and innocent of great sin.
May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."* Psalm 19:12-14

This is one of the key secrets to David's success and a lesson to us all in humility, service and submission. Often we're guilty of making plans and then expecting God to bless them. If someone with the status of a king sees fit to seek God first, we should certainly be doing the same. David is an outstanding role model in this area.

David's obedience and humility meant that God could not only trust him to rule, but he could also be entrusted to minister to us. Thus we have the legacy of the Psalms to comfort and instruct us, and the legacy of his life to learn from. Aside from Jesus, more passages in the Bible are about David than anyone else. In 2 Samuel 7:9b the Lord told David, "...I will make your name as famous as anyone who has ever lived on the earth!" Even in secular society, David is well known as an archetypal hero. Archaeology and three major religions recognise David as an inspiring and pivotal figure.



Please pause to consider this: if we adopt David's habits of seeking the Lord's will for our lives FIRST, what legacy can we leave behind? What can we be doing that positively changes our world and impacts future generations?

We sing about wanting to be history makers; submission and then obedience is how we achieve that. It is not an easy road. It requires sacrifice and selflessness; yet if we really want to walk closely with the Lord, knowing that we've done the very best that we can, then we need to be like David and put ourselves second. Our success will come when we get on our knees first and not take action until we know what God wants for us.

*"I lift up my eyes to you,
to you who sit enthroned in heaven.
As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a female slave look to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,
till he shows us his mercy."* Psalm 123:1-2



Jonathan: Valiant Role Model of Faith

If you've heard a sermon on friendship, then undoubtably you've either learned about Ruth and Naomi, or David and Jonathan. Jonathan is a beautiful example of a true friend who doesn't allow age difference, social status, wealth, tribal ties or a high risk of violent parental disapproval, hold him back from loving and supporting David without reserve.

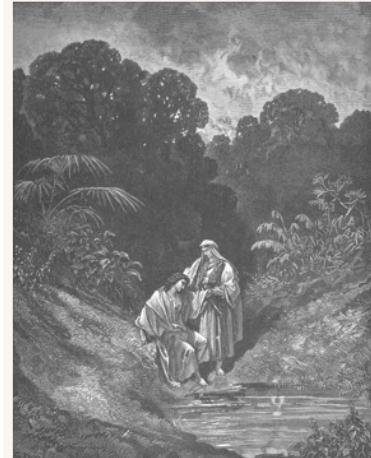
It is easy to treat Jonathan as a satellite of David, but he is an valiant man and amazing spiritual role model in his own right. He is smarter than his father, King Saul, and is a self-determining man of action, who gets tough jobs done using his own initiative. I have a special place in my heart for Jonathan, because of his bravery and his outstanding faith.

1. A Lifestyle of Faith

Jonathan was not only a highly accomplished warrior, but also a man of strong faith and courage from before David's time. He may very well have been one of David's strongest role models. He obviously knew the Word of God (Torah) and his belief in God was far greater than anything that his father, Saul, possessed or was willing to develop.

"To reach the Philistine outpost, Jonathan had to go down between two rocky cliffs... "Let's go across to the outpost of those pagans," Jonathan said to his armour bearer. "Perhaps the Lord will help us, for nothing can hinder the Lord. He can win a battle whether He has many warriors or only a few!"

1 Samuel 14:4-6



Jonathan doesn't have a quiet, personal faith either. He not only demonstrates his belief, but he uses it to build David up. He fully intends to serve the Lord alongside David, and his faith in God's provision in David's life never wavers.

In 1 Samuel 23:16-18 David is desperately seeking sanctuary from Saul's zealous plans to have him dead:

"One day near Horesh, David received the news that Saul was on the way to Ziph to search for him and kill him. Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God. "Don't be afraid," Jonathan reassured him. "My father will never find you! You are going to be the king of Israel, and I will be next to you, as my father, Saul, is well aware." So the two of them renewed their solemn pact before the Lord. Then Jonathan returned home, while David stayed at Horesh."

This is the kind of support we need to give to each other. In times of pain, fear and stress, it's an invaluable gift and David must have been comforted by those words of assurance in the hard years to come. It is little wonder he grieved so heavily when Jonathan died. Close friends who lift you up are more valuable than all of a king's wealth. Having a backbone of support from someone within the royal family, who was convinced of David's future and fully supportive of it, (despite the sacrifice he'd personally have to make), must have played a strong part of David becoming the man of God he became. Jonathan would have given me great courage.

2. An Attitude of Submission and Obedience to God

As Crown Prince (heir to King Saul's throne), Jonathan's selflessness is particularly outstanding. He recognises that David is God's choice for the King of Isra'el, and he is bravely willing to give David that place without hesitation, regardless of the rift it created between him and his father,

Saul. His disobedience was no small thing. Saul had tried to kill Jonathan in the past for disobeying an oath he knew nothing about, so you can image how the following act of rebellion went over. [Ref. 1 Samuel 14]

*"Saul boiled with rage at Jonathan. "You stupid son of a *perverse and rebellious woman!" he swore at him. "Do you think I don't know that you want him to be king in your place, shaming yourself and your mother? As long as that son of Jesse is alive, you'll never be king. Now go and get him so I can kill him!" 1 Samuel 20:30-31*

Jonathan stuck up for his friend and God's choice of King, no matter what.

It's remarkable to me, that Jonathan made a clear decision about the quality of David's character so early. He was a man who looked at life through discerning eyes of faith and ran on God's priorities. There is no equivalent in history to match Jonathan's willing submission to the Lord's choice of king, especially as princes have a well-earned reputation for wealth and power seeking, spoiled behaviour. I studied historical abdications and no other royal has ever matched Jonathan's determined heart. Kings stepped down because of illness, revolts against their reign, or because they were forced out. Nowhere was I able to find a reference to a king giving up his throne to someone who was not their son. Jonathan knew there was something special about David, from the moment he saw Goliath defeated.

"After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan, the king's son. There was an immediate bond between them, for Jonathan loved David. From that day on Saul kept David with him and wouldn't let him return home. And Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, because he loved him as he loved himself. Jonathan sealed the pact by taking off his robe and giving it to David, together with his tunic, sword, bow, and belt." 1 Samuel 18:1-4

We see little of it described, but Jonathan's relationship with the Lord was one of depth, which enabled him to be the kind of friend that each of us needs in our corner. It is only by knowing the ways of God and communing with Him, that any of us achieve this kind of character. Jonathan's actions are something that only the presence of the Lord in someone's heart can achieve.

3. A Friend Who Inspires You to be the Best Version of Yourself

In a time when male friendship seems to be too often characterised by drinking together, pranks, competition, reckless behaviour and dirty jokes, the manner in which David and Jonathan interact is quite a contrast, and speaks volumes about the Godly character of both men.

"Then David bowed three times to Jonathan with his face to the ground. Both of them were in tears as they embraced each other and said good-bye, especially David. At last Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn loyalty to each other in the Lord's name. The Lord is the witness of a bond between us and our children forever." Then David left, and Jonathan returned to the town." 1 Samuel 20:41-42

True friends inspire us to be the best version of ourselves that we can be, and Jonathan had that affect on David. For someone you love and respect, you will go the extra mile to ensure you've done the right thing by them. David did this to fulfil his promise to Jonathan which was made in 1 Samuel 20:13b when Saul was trying to kill David.

Jonathan said, *"May the Lord be with you as He used to be with my father. And may you treat me with the faithful love of the Lord as long as I live. But if I die, treat my family with this faithful love, even when the Lord destroys all your enemies from the face of the earth." So Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, saying, "May the Lord destroy all your enemies!" And Jonathan made David reaffirm his vow of friendship again, for Jonathan loved David as he loved himself."*

It hasn't escaped me that Jonathan's words included his father, Saul. Again, I wonder what Saul put Jonathan through as a father, and what, if any, respect and faith Jonathan had left in him.

2 Samuel 9:1-11 speaks of the fulfilment of that vow.

"One day David asked, "Is anyone in Saul's family still alive anyone to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake? ... His name was Mephibosheth; he was Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson. When he came to David, he bowed low to the ground in deep respect. David said, "Greetings, Mephibosheth." Mephibosheth replied, "I am your servant." "Don't be afraid!" David said. "I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the property that once belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will eat here with me at the king's table!" ... And from that time on, Mephibosheth ate regularly at David's table, like one of the king's own sons."

Even in 2 Samuel 19:24-30 when I am not entirely sure of Mephibosheth's true loyalty to David, (David had to flee Jerusalem to save it from Absalom), David does not let the pact down.

"Now Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, came down from Jerusalem to meet the king. He had not cared for his feet, trimmed his beard, or washed his clothes since the day the king left Jerusalem. "Why didn't you come with me, Mephibosheth?" the king asked him. Mephibosheth replied, "My Lord the king, my servant Ziba deceived me. I told him, 'Saddle my donkey so I can go with the king.' For as you know I am crippled. Ziba has slandered me by saying that I refused to come. But I know that my Lord the king is like an angel of God, so do what you think is best. All my relatives and I could expect only death from you, my Lord, but instead you have honoured me by allowing me to eat at your own table! What more can I ask?" "You've said enough," David replied. "I've decided that you and Ziba will divide your land equally between you." "Give him all of it," Mephibosheth said. "I am content just to have you safely back again, my Lord the king!"

A NOTE ON THE DEPTH OF THE FRIENDSHIP

*"I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
You have been very pleasant to me.
Your love to me was more wonderful
Than the love of women." 1 Samuel 1:26*

A question I see debated is whether or not David was bisexual or homosexual. Despite many opinions to the contrary, I am going to say, no. Why? Because of his cultural manner of communication and because both men are of outstanding God-fearing character. Thirdly, homosexual acts (not people) are openly stated as being an abomination in the Bible. God could not have allowed someone undertaking those acts to lead a nation, as the spiritual head of the nation, which the Jewish kings were. In addition, every one of David's sins came with a penalty which involved life being lost. He did not get to build the temple, due to his earlier violent behaviour in life (no lives were lost here, this is the only exception). He was confronted and punished for his sin with BathSheba and their son died and he was confronted and punished for the census he never should have ordered and thousands of people died as a result. King-sized sins had king-sized repercussions which were harsh.

Homosexual acts incurred the death sentence, which he narrowly escaped because of BathSheba. Had David had an affair with Jonathan, he would have been severely dealt with, if not, dethroned and killed. The Davidic Covenant which led to the Messiah coming from his line could not have been established from David, under such circumstances. This is spiritual common sense. A covenant is a serious matter, especially one of such magnitude and the Lord would not have been able to slacken his discipline of David and compromise the law.

What I see here is David being, perhaps, too honest, for our western ears. It is well worth noting the figurative and poetic language that David used in the Psalms was traditional to his culture and

when reading verses such as these, Western society easily misinterprets the meaning based on our current norms. This part of the Song of the Bow sounds as though David is describing his relationship with Jonathan in a way which indicates sexual intimacy. This is a cultural misunderstanding.

In **Manners and Customs of Bible Lands by Fred H. Wight, Fred points out that "*The Oriental frequently makes statements that to the Westerner sound like uncalled-for exaggeration.... (we) must remember the fondness of the Oriental for the hyperbole.*" and "*The Oriental considers it to be perfectly proper to talk about anything that is natural in the presence of men, women, and children. And this is done in refined circles. A respectable woman (or man) from the Holy Land cannot understand why some critics of the Bible have condemned the Scriptural mention of certain matters deemed wrong for Westerners to talk about.*" *** I have written before about how David never held back from expressing his emotions, which is in line with his culture. In his time, a friendship between men could be expressed with as much affection without raising eyebrows.

The Bible always calls out homosexual acts as wrong. Had David been in a physical relationship with Jonathan, by the precedents already set in David's story, he would have been called out for it by a prophet and punished. God never let David's most severe sins go unpunished.

As for the wording, "...*your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women.*" Like any husband, David would have felt let down and harassed at times, by the complications of his relationships with his wives; and like many men, he would have felt a strong bond with other men who tend to be less demanding and complicated. How many men do you know who go to a friend's place to watch sport when the heat is on with the Mrs? Men, especially on the battlefield, bond very deeply. They rely on each other for survival and that can build connections which are equally as strong as those of husband and wife, if not more so. If you doubt this, research why veterans miss war and watch this video by Sebastian Junger on TED Talks. It is exceptionally helpful. https://www.ted.com/talks/sebastian_junger_why_veterans_miss_war?language=en Romans 5:7 says "*Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.*" In combat, men shield their comrades in this way. Don't underestimate that bond's power.

David was very normal for the type of life he lived. Close friends are more valuable than all of a king's wealth and Jonathan was one of them.



REFERENCES

- *This text is taken from the New Living Translation, but this wording is from the Hebrew translation of this passage.
- **Manners and Customs of Bible Lands by Fred H. Wight, Copyright 1953 Read it here: <http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=qDQAYzDf0WM%3D>
- *** When You Just Lose It - Masculinity and Keeping it Real
<http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=33034>



King David's Approach to Violence and What We Need to Learn from Him

In my jewellery box is an Irish warrior's shield pendant. Sometimes I wonder what King David would have to say about me owning one. Part of me feels a little foolish, in that I am not a warrior, so what am I doing with such a thing? I haven't earned my stripes in battle, but have certainly overcome my share of obstacles... That must be acceptable, but my concern goes deeper than that.

What am I, as a Christian, doing valuing a symbol of violence? Unlike His great-grandfather, David, Jesus was a man of total peace. He never hit anyone, never killed anyone in Isra'el's defence. He was like Solomon: a man of peace who built the new temple of God. As I live within the New Testament covenant of grace, I am duty bound to be a person of peace, turning the other cheek. The only sword I am supposed to hold is the sword of the Word of God. I agree, but images of swords and shields make me feel safe.



Today reinforced how much I am not alone in this. My husband and I went to the Queensland Museum's "Medieval Power: Symbols and Splendour" exhibition, which held an intriguing collection of objects from the British Museum. The exhibit had pottery, religious objects, marvellous jewellery, seals, the most stunning drawings and scenes carved into ivory with the most exquisite craftsmanship... and there were knights. There were knights everywhere; they dominated.

Knights are romantic figures. Cosplayers want to be them, we play video games to become them and in Medieval times, Kings and noblemen who had never seen battle, had their portraits painted wearing a knight's armour, just to prove how powerful and successful they were. Knights were rich men. One piece was a badge that would be attached to a horse's bridle, and the explanation told us that a war horse cost four hundred times the salary of a common man: that is that man's yearly salary. That's an obscene amount of money, but regardless, people wanted to be a knight! We're frequently drawn to the hero who vanquishes enemies and wins. Why? Because feeling powerful makes us all feel safe; it's not just me who wants that shield.

The biggest take home message I got from the exhibition was our fascination with violence, which is startlingly as alive now, as it ever was. We no longer have to worry about our houses being raided, in the same way people were forced to in times past. We have police, locks, alarm systems and a sense of security undreamed of in that time; yet still we are drawn to violence. The games we play are Grand Theft Auto, World of Warcraft, Call of Duty Black Ops 3. We watch the Karate Kid movies, Mission Impossible, Navy Seals and many, many crime and punishment style television programs, with violent content. Mankind is drawn towards harming others in many ways.

Here in March 2016, we want world peace, but in November 2015, Activision, who makes Call of Duty, earned \$1.04 billion in three months from game sales. For people who don't want war, what is going on? The answer is simple: it's sin in action. Our carnal nature takes us where we shouldn't go and we fill our time with destructive entertainment.

You'd never expect to see Jesus playing these games, but what about David? Would he have played them, being the warrior he was? I don't believe so.

I do have a basis for that belief. While his not going to war is criticised by theologians in regards to his sin with Bathsheba, when I studied David's military habits, it was his custom to not run into every battle. [Ref: 2 Samuel 11:1] In this incident with the Ammonites, the head of the army, Joab, took command of the first part, then in verses 10:6,7 when the Ammonites called in more reinforcements, David left for battle with more of his men. David also stays back in Psalm 60 and in 2 Samuel 2:12-17.

Now we don't know why he did that, but what is crystal clear is his choice not to be obsessed with pursuing violence and the fame that military victory can bring. My article, Yesterday's Hero, talks about the persecution David underwent as King, when his early victories over Goliath and in Saul's army were pretty much forgotten. This could have fuelled him to get into the action and concrete his image as an indispensable asset to the nation, but it didn't. David fought for the safety of Isra'el and in line with the standards in the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) and that appears to be it. For whatever reason he chose to not become a career soldier-King, he still made that choice. This decision has been highlighted by Joab's actions. If someone was a threat, Joab killed them without a hint of regret. Joab spent months on the battlefields killing men and his unrighteous love of the sword and strife was a thorn in David's side. [Ref: 2 Samuel 3:1-30]

We know that David was a kind-hearted man, who looked to the Lord for protection and ruled with wisdom.

"So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people." 2 Samuel 8:15

His vision of the world was broader than any sword, it was based on spiritual principles and his love of God, and that made him a far greater success than any military prowess he had.

"For David had done what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and had obeyed the Lord's commands throughout his life, except in the affair concerning Uriah the Hittite." 1 Kings 15:5
and

"After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after My Own Heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'"
Acts 13:22

There's the key: knowing God's heart. That heart is One that protects when necessary, but doesn't honour or need the adrenaline rush of violence to thrive. God's heart is the One which chooses a change in character; it's the One which heals and delivers and it's the One David looked to for protection. Read Psalm 11; it starts: *"I trust in the Lord for protection. So why do you say to me, 'Fly like a bird to the mountains for safety!'"* Then goes on to say, *"The Lord examines both the righteous and the wicked. He hates those who love violence."* David knew where the boundaries were and he stopped before he reached them.

It's no new revelation that we should reject the things of this world, and that includes any participation in violent entertainment in any form; but when you look at that same value from a successful warrior's point of view, that message hits home so much harder. We need to copy David's example and put our imaginary swords away.



King David's Diplomacy: Manipulative or Spirit Driven?

Learning about King David has been a continual reminder to never judge, especially as no matter how much I have studied, because David's life is presented as a series of anecdotes, I will never have all the facts. I look at some of David's actions as a leader and I honestly don't know whether to trust him, call him a schemer, or give him the benefit of the doubt, as maybe he was doing the right thing? In some cases it did seem like David was doing the only right thing that could be done; the problem is, as he lied in some incidents leading up to pivotal events, he's given me reason to doubt his character. Without knowing what he was thinking, his motives can look suspicious.

The text which makes me doubt him the *most is at the beginning of 2 Samuel. King Ishbosheth's Captain, Abner, is murdered by Joab, the Philistines have killed Saul and Jonathan and Isra'el is divided by civil war. Ishbosheth rules the north and David, Judah, in the south. Both kingdoms must come together, and angered by Ishbosheth, Abner decides he will make David King of all.

"Meanwhile, Abner had consulted with the elders of Israel. "For some time now," he told them, "you have wanted to make David your king. Now is the time! For the Lord has said, 'I have chosen David to save my people Israel from the hands of the Philistines and from all their other enemies.'" Abner also spoke with the men of Benjamin. Then he went to Hebron to tell David that all the people of Israel and Benjamin had agreed to support him."

2 Samuel 3:17-19

Abner is not the kind of man you want to trust, but David had to, and did. However, dirty business had gone on in the background between Joab's brothers and Abner, and at a critical point, Joab murdered Abner in cold blood, in revenge for killing his brother Asahel. [Ref. 1 Samuel 2 and 3]

Quite rightly, David was angry. That murder opened the way for David to be made King of all of Isra'el and he could easily have been blamed for the murder. So he makes a smart move:

"Then David said to Joab and all those who were with him, "Tear your clothes and put on burlap. Mourn for Abner." And King David himself walked behind the procession to the grave. They buried Abner in Hebron, and the king and all the people wept at his graveside. Then the king sang this funeral song for Abner:

"Should Abner have died as fools die?

Your hands were not bound;

your feet were not chained.

No, you were murdered—

the victim of a wicked plot."

All the people wept again for Abner. David had refused to eat anything on the day of the funeral, and now everyone begged him to eat. But David had made a vow, saying, "May God strike me and even kill me if I eat anything before sundown."

This pleased the people very much. In fact, everything the king did pleased them! So everyone in Judah and all Israel understood that David was not responsible for Abner's murder.

Then King David said to his officials, "Don't you realize that a great commander has fallen today in Israel? And even though I am the anointed king, these two sons of Zeruiah—Joab and Abishai—are too strong for me to control. So may the Lord repay these evil men for their evil deeds." 2 Samuel 3:31-39

So, how genuine do you think David's grief was? It does appear that it could have been wholly politically motivated. However, remember that most of the story is missing.

1. Could David have fought alongside Abner when they were both in Saul's army? Battlefields make for deep bonds and who knows, one of them could have saved the other's life. Their relationship is completely unknown other than a few brief conversations.

2. There is an old tradition within military circles which goes back to ancient times: even if you don't like someone in authority, you salute them as you respect their rank, regardless of what you think of the man. This could have applied and would reflect well on David's character.
3. We don't know what Abner's military service record was. He could have been a great hero of the nation, deserving the utmost respect. To be a commander in Saul's army he would have been a brave man and an excellent warrior. David may be rightfully honouring that.
4. Showing kindness to someone by respecting their reputation is always an excellent move.

David did what was culturally right, what was politically right, what was Scripturally right and what also saved his hide. Whichever way your opinion of David's actions sways, his actions were a win and were overwhelmingly approved by the people. He was God's choice for the throne and this event soon after enabled the Lord's Will to be put in place.

Shortly after, Ishbosheth was murdered in his bed, a cowardly act which also enraged David. That was a dishonourable way to dethrone a king, especially as his murderers then went to David wanting favour for handing him the northern kingdom. David correctly had these traitors immediately put to death. [Ref: 2 Samuel 4]

Whatever you think of David, he was an excellent leader who was congenial, righteous and popular with the people; and when the scales were balanced, "*the Lord made David victorious wherever he went....David reigned over all Israel and did what was just and right for all his people.*" 2 Samuel 8:14b-15 Unless his heart was in the right place and he was acting correctly under God's favour, that would not have been the case.

NOTES

*David mourned Saul and Jonathan in a similar, appropriate manner (regardless of what he must have thought of Saul,) in the Song of the Bow.

*"O women of Israel, weep for Saul,
for he dressed you in luxurious scarlet clothing,
in garments decorated with gold.
Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen in battle!
Jonathan lies dead on the hills."* 1 Samuel 1:24-25



Kintsugi and Kings: Using the Blessing You've Been Given

The greatest contrast between King David and King Saul, is the way they responded to the Presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. It's not simply that David had more faith in God, or was more obedient; David strode out in front because when given access to God's Spirit, he grabbed that blessing with both hands, hung onto the Holy Spirit for dear life and made the most of the blessing he'd been given.

Only a handful of people in the Old Testament were granted the Presence of the Holy Spirit. Knowing this has had me scratching my head wondering what was up with Saul? We all invest in our relationship with God differently, however, if the Presence of God was so rare in Saul and David's time, why didn't Saul grab hold of His empowerment, as David did, and run with it? Why didn't he bother to develop his relationship with God in such a desperate time?

Many men have resisted the prompting of the Lord with devout stubbornness beyond logical reasoning. Saul was known for acting out of fear and desperation, from the earliest accounts of him hiding behind the baggage carts, wanting to avoid being made King. I believe that fear was the main reason why he didn't build and benefit from his link to the Lord. Later, the pride that came with the position of Kingship and the successes could have added to that problem. Saul was willing to fall into despair rather than overcome. He didn't reach out to the Lord for what He needed, so God was never allowed to help and guide him. He became a cracked, broken pot which had to be discarded, rather than lovingly repaired.



There is a Japanese method for repairing broken pottery called kintsugi. One blogger aptly called it, "the art of embracing damage." This is pretty much what David did, instead of crumbling when he felt broken, then recoiling in fear, David surveyed the damage and allowed God's Spirit to beautifully repair him. He didn't give up as the challenges that faced him were too hard, and the dangers too great: he prayed, praised and fasted his way through. David allowed the Lord to pick up the pieces, and he never stopped doing this.

A short, simple definition of kintsugi can be found on Wikipedia:

"Kintsugi (金継ぎ?, きんつき, "golden joinery"), also known as Kintsukuroi (金繕い?, きんつくろい, "golden repair"), is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum, a method similar to the maki-e technique. As a philosophy, it treats breakage and repair as part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise... As a philosophy, kintsugi can be seen to have similarities to the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi, an embracing of the flawed or imperfect. Japanese aesthetics values marks of wear by the use of an object. This can be seen as a rationale for keeping an object around even after it has broken and as a justification of kintsugi itself, highlighting the cracks and repairs as simply an event in the life of an object rather than allowing its service to end at the time of its damage or breakage."

Source: Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kintsugi>

When allowed, God is the greatest kintsugi Master. He will repair even hairline cracks with the most beautiful materials and intricate craftsmanship; and unless we deliberately chip away at His repair, it will hold. He did this with David so many times and we can still see and are encouraged by the delicate streams of gold which run through David's life.



Whenever trouble overwhelmed David, he went to God for the answer and built more strength into his relationship with God each time he did this. When God didn't answer immediately, David never stopped hammering on His door until he got the response he needed, no matter what. He did not resort to killing to make himself feel secure. He did not go against his moral or spiritual beliefs to deal with his enemies: he knew he had the Spirit of the Lord and he actively built that relationship and because that link became strong, it was able to hold him up, even when he was so sick he should have died.

There is a very simple lesson in this: when God gives you an opportunity to rely on His Spirit, use it! Build on that relationship, use His power and guidance and give it everything you've got!



Luke Skywalker and King David: The Secret of Winning Wars Against Evil

I have been a Star Wars fan since the first movie came out in 1977. I recently bought The Force Awakens, and as nostalgia kicked in, I started to see similarities between Luke Skywalker and the young man, David. Both of their lives were taken up the battle of good against evil and looking deeper into the Star Wars culture, I found more parallels than are immediately obvious.

It's simply not enough to be able to pick up a sword and fight a war. Conquering darkness occurs on so many levels and many of them live beneath the surface in emotions, memories and thoughts. Any winning fight is fuelled by positive emotions and empowered by higher spiritual beliefs.

Both Luke and David came from menial jobs in backwater towns, which had a poor reputation. While David had a more mature attitude and had been taught about his God since early childhood, both men were quickly propelled into positions of **power**, with the outcome affecting millions of people. In reading Wookipedia.com, I found this quote which places Luke and David on very similar footing.



"It has been said that anyone who knows the ways of the Force can set her, or himself up as a King on any world where only she or he knows the ways of the Force. Any Jedi could do this. But the Jedi, fools that they are, adhere to a religion in which the Force is used only in the service of others." Palpatine, in "The Weakness of Inferiors"

If you chose to, you could liken Goliath and the Philistine armies, to Darth Vader and the Empire; however, the similarity I saw between Luke and David was on a personal level. We see a lot of Star Wars' plot focussing on Luke battling with his impatience, his anger, his fear, and his mixed feelings about his father. When you examine how he reacts to situations which arise and challenge his leadership, David battles the same anger and fear issues as Luke. [David's journey is recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, 1 Kings and the Psalms]

David's **anger** is a character trait which is shown while he is on the run from Saul. He and his men have been providing security for a man named Nabal, and when the rich, arrogant Nabal makes no effort to pay them, David is ready to run him through with his sword. However, like Luke, he does listen, then heed the wise counsel given by Abigail. Both Luke and David show a **willingness to learn** in their youth, which is what will ultimately keep them on the right side of evil. [Ref. 1 Samuel 25]

There are several other instances where David loses his temper. One occurred when the Ark of the Covenant is being brought into Jerusalem, and the cart it is being carried on slips. An innocent man is killed because he touched the Ark and David explodes. *"David was angry because the Lord's anger had burst out against Uzzah. He named that place Perez-uzzah ("which means to burst out against Uzzah"), as it is still called today. David was now afraid of the Lord..."* 2 Samuel 6:8-9a (See footnote on the Ark.)

Patience and calm were pivotal traits that Luke and David had to learn. Without them, both men would have too much potential to do great harm. David did learn the lesson and encouraged others to learn it too.

*"Stop being angry!
Turn from your rage!"*

*Do not lose your temper:
it only leads to harm." Psalm 37:8*

Whether you win or lose a battle depends very much on how you do things, both internally and externally. If you have a short fuse, the overflow of emotion will cloud your choices, as if did for Luke when he knew that Han and Leia were in danger on Bespin. If you rush in, like Luke, you lose the battle and you can lose more than that... like a hand.

Anger also directly affects men on the **battle field**. Fencers (sports), tell us that sword fights are nothing like the Hollywood portrayal of them. A real Jedi versus Sith, or Israelite versus Philistine fight would be over in seconds and who would win? The combatant who kept calm. The second a combatant loses their temper and allows emotion to take over, they stop effectively processing what is happening, and become easy to defeat. There is no glamour and glory in war. A man may be able to earn himself a reputation as a skilled warrior, but it's an ugly business. Attacking out of fear and hate only make it more putrid, as the loss of a soul to the wrong source of power is the greatest loss any battle can generate.

Fear is the other emotional battle which both men had to strive to conquer. Fear is a natural, protective emotion which is not inherently bad. We need fear to make us question the wisdom of our actions and protect us from danger. The problems set in when, as occurred with Saul, fear makes us paranoid and we take unnecessary risks, become bitter and go to insane lengths to make ourselves safe.

In the first three Star Wars movies we see Luke battle with fear as he learns to be a Jedi. At the end of the seventh movie, as Rey begins to beg Luke for help, his fearful reluctance is obvious. **You can never completely conquer fear**, and if you were to do so, you would do yourself, and others, great harm.

David is plotted against many times during his life, you often see him write about fear in the Psalms.

*"I have heard the many rumours about me,
and I am surrounded by terror.
My enemies conspire against me,
plotting to take my life.
But I am trusting you, O Lord,
saying, "You are my God!"
My future is in your hands.
Rescue me from those who hunt me down relentlessly."* Psalm 31:13-15

There is nothing weak or unmanly in admitting fear. What matters in the end is how he chose to deal with it. David turned to the Lord for assistance and deliverance.

You could take the good versus evil fight further with David, and consider how his **lust over Bathsheba** took him to a dark place where evil gained control. If Luke Skywalker's life is ever shown in more detail, he's bound to have faced a similar challenge too.

David's life story is about what happens when God gets hold of an ordinary life. Luke's story is centred on the heroism of just one man. None of us can ever be Luke Skywalker, and while he is an interesting character, he has nothing but a fictional philosophy to offer us which will be forgotten long after David is still remembered; but we can all follow in the footsteps of David, and be spiritually victorious by developing a relationship with God that will change ourselves and other people. David's success is accessible to all of us. Learning about his life points us directly to the Lord, the One who can truly help us overcome all our fears and win all our battles.

WOOKIEEPEDIA REFERENCES

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FOOTNOTE ON THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

Trying to find the correct manner in which to transport the Ark is not an easy task. It's not that David didn't do his homework. I have tried to find the same information and went around in circles for hours, as every other procedure for caring for the Ark was spelled out except that one! [Ref: Exodus chapters 25-31 and then chapters 35-40]



Milk, Honey & Remembering How Much God Values You!

I don't know if it's because we have seen movies and illustrations of Biblical events which are set in the desert, but it's easy to view Isra'el as a barren place. I have also heard it described as useless and insignificant in Bible Studies. We're more familiar with the Judean desert than we are with the beautiful areas along the Mediterranean coastline, the snow covered mountains and the lush areas around Galilee and the Jordan River.

Isra'el hasn't always been bordered by as much desert as exists now. God promised from the time of Abraham, that He would give His people a land flowing with milk and honey. Even now, with the use of hydroponics and smart water usage, the desert blooms and Isra'el has bountiful produce, as the Lord has always intended for His people. He bought them back to the land, as promised and it's not completely desolate. In my local grocery store here in Australia, I can buy products such as couscous, which were made in Isra'el. Yet I can guarantee, the next Biblical movie will have a desert set. Why do we think God would 'bless' His children with an all but useless pile of sand?

"Milk and honey" obviously denotes a land which can sustain a growing population. Until recently, I didn't realise just how much blessing the Lord had set up for the young nation of Isra'el once she left Egypt. Milk and honey is just the start. When you look into the commands that the Lord gave to Moses, concerning Isra'el, they are incredibly generous, and exalted God's people to a status which was the complete opposite to that which they had, had as slaves. This was not a land of stale bread and dirty water.

"For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you." Deuteronomy 8:7-10

Firstly, in Numbers 15:38, the Isra'elites were told to add tassels to their garments which were died a specific blue, which is called tekhelet. This must have been an astonishing command, as these ex-slaves were being ordered by their God to adorn themselves with an incredibly expensive product which was so costly, it was only worn by royalty and the highest ranking noblemen. It comes from a sea creature called the Chillazon, and it takes many of these creatures to produce enough dye to make one thread blue.

This command of the Lord reinforced the value that God's people had in His eyes. They were to be a royal priesthood, that served and thrived under Him. Instead of living the arduous, miserable life of a slave, they were valued, provided for and adored. [Exodus 19:6 and 1 Peter 2:9]

So why would you give people, who you love, a desert? God didn't. Isra'el in the time of Moses and then David, was in a fertile crescent which had excellent rainfall. This is why the land was fought over by so many nations: it had sea access, lucrative trade routes and was bountiful. God's children were given the very best. Land that could sustain cattle (milk), obviously had good grazing and enough room for sheep, goats and all the animals which required good quality pasture.



That rich pasture would also provide the needs of the honey bees, another indulgent luxury which speaks of the good life. As milk provides health to the bones, honey helps feed a joyful spirit, plus it has antibacterial qualities and is brilliant for treating wounds and infections. This speaks of God not only giving His children an indulgent treat, but His meeting their medical needs in a practical manner.

Like the children of Isra'el, we too have been delivered from being slaves to sin. *"Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living."* Romans 6:18 Yet, it is too easy to think of our lives in the same way we see Isra'el: as a battle scarred, desolate land which is hard to live in. There is a modern Christian movement which has taken on wearing Old Testament tekhelet tassels as God commanded, and they do this to remind themselves to obey God, but for them, it is also a beautiful reminder that they too are God's chosen people and have the status of princes and princesses within the Kingdom of the Lord.

It's not necessary to wear a tassel to know how much you mean to the Lord, but an understanding of the Old Testament and what the nation of Isra'el meant to God helps us enormously to understand just how loved we are. We are all grafted into the same vine, so what applies to the Jewish people, applies to us equally.

"Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love."
Romans 5:2-5

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs."

Romans 8:14-17a

So next time you feel miserable and inclined to believe that life is bleak and that God will never come through for you because you're not important to Him, remember the land of milk and honey. We are all meant to know that we are loved, greatly valued and are going to be provided for. It may take some time for God's provision to come through, but if you hold fast to Him, He'll always be there for you.

*"Your eternal Word, O Lord,
stands firm in heaven.
Your faithfulness extends to every generation,
as enduring as the earth You created.
Your regulations remain true to this day,
for everything serves Your plans.
If Your instructions hadn't sustained me with joy,
I would have died in my misery.
I will never forget Your commandments,
for by them You give me life."* Psalm 119:89-93



Obedience That Hurts

I love the promise of Psalm 37:3-4:

"Trust in the Lord and do good.

Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.

Take delight in the Lord,

and He will give you your heart's desires."

This is a beautiful verse which I have read and heard mentioned many, many times. It's good news for any of us who have dreams, and are hoping for the will of God to prevail, so that we may achieve that thing which we want so dearly.

David had one great dream which he poured everything he had into: he wanted to build a temple to house the Presence of God and the Ark of the Covenant. 1 Chronicles 22:5 tells us that David said, "...the Temple to be built for the Lord must be a magnificent structure, famous and glorious throughout the world, I will begin making preparations for it now." So David collected vast amounts of building materials before his death."

He also sorted out the rosters and duties of the priests and temple musicians and in 1 Chronicles 29:3-5, David gives his personal wealth to his dream.

"And now, because of my devotion to the Temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected for his holy Temple. I am donating more than 112 tons of gold from Ophir and 262 tons of refined silver to be used for overlaying the walls of the buildings and for the other gold and silver work to be done by the craftsmen. Now then, who will follow my example and give offerings to the Lord today?"

If you want something in life, you need to be prepared to give. You must sacrifice, stay true to your vision and invest your time and energy in hard work, regardless of what obstacles you face. Success is achieved by effort, faithful devotion to the Lord and consistently pressing forward. In the end, it's worth it.

But what if you never get to see your dream fulfilled? What if you are not allowed to see your dream fulfilled and have to pass it onto someone else? This is what happened to David.

In 2 Samuel 7, God accepts David's desire to build Him a house and establishes a covenant with David which will lead to the birth of the Messiah, Jesus, who comes from David's line. That is a massive promise, which overwhelmed David. He would not have understood the full implications, but he certainly understood how much God was honouring him. But despite how much he pleased the Lord, and no matter how great his desire was to have Yahweh worshipped in a manner befitting to his God, this happened: *"But the Lord said to me, 'You have killed many men in the battles you have fought. And since you have shed so much blood in My sight, you will not be the one to build a Temple to honour My Name."* 2 Chronicles 22:8 It must have crushed David.

The amount of time it took David to plan, design and put all the materials aside for the temple was extensive, and demonstrates his absolute dedication to his dream. He worked on the temple down the last detail, as shown in 1 Chronicles 28:11-19.

"Then David gave Solomon the plans for the Temple and its surroundings, including the entry room, the storerooms, the upstairs rooms, the inner rooms, and the inner sanctuary—which was the place of atonement. David also gave Solomon all the plans he had in mind for the courtyards of the Lord's Temple, the outside rooms, the treasuries, and the rooms for the gifts dedicated to the Lord. The king also gave Solomon the instructions concerning the work of

the various divisions of priests and Levites in the Temple of the Lord. And he gave specifications for the items in the Temple that were to be used for worship.

David gave instructions regarding how much gold and silver should be used to make the items needed for service. He told Solomon the amount of gold needed for the gold lampstands and lamps, and the amount of silver for the silver lampstands and lamps, depending on how each would be used. He designated the amount of gold for the table on which the Bread of the Presence would be placed and the amount of silver for other tables.

David also designated the amount of gold for the solid gold meat hooks used to handle the sacrificial meat and for the basins, pitchers, and dishes, as well as the amount of silver for every dish. He designated the amount of refined gold for the altar of incense. Finally, he gave him a plan for the Lord's "chariot"—the gold cherubim whose wings were stretched out over the Ark of the Lord's Covenant. "Every part of this plan," David told Solomon, "was given to me in writing from the hand of the Lord."

This is one of the events in David's life which makes me stop and wonder how I would handle being in the same position. I would have a terrible time with it. I like to have a vision, but I like to see results. To be able to make preparations to that extent and not be able to even lay the foundation, would test my dedication to that vision to the maximum extent. David had bought the land at least a decade before he died. His offer to build the temple came a long time before that. It's not as if this was an idea he had late in life, when he was rich enough to throw it all together and didn't have to live with the restriction for long. This was a long-term disappointment, and perhaps a long term frustration.

When Nathan gives David God's response to his desire to build a temple in 2 Samuel 7, there is no mention of David being told he couldn't be the builder at that time. He must have found out afterwards, perhaps as he searched for land? Perhaps as he sought the Lord for guidance on what He desired? After rejoicing over God's acceptance of his gift and the making of the Davidic covenant, "*no, not you*," must have been a painful shock. We don't know when this happened or how, but it certainly shows David's great love for the Lord that he continued on. When the temple was built he wouldn't be there to enjoy it, neither would he be there to gain any glory from it. (Though he was honoured by both God and man at that time. See 2 Chronicles chapters 5 to 7.)

What astounds me is that David obeyed, no matter how much it hurt. That is incredibly hard to do, especially for a King who is accustomed and entitled to be obeyed. He could have taken the egotistical route and done what he wanted, anyway; but David knew how to be humble. He accepted that no was no, and he stuck by the rules. That is not typical behaviour for many of us, let alone for a monarch.

This part of David's life is a lesson in how to deal with disappointment and how to stay faithful, no matter what. However, the aspect which stands out clearer to me than anything else, is how much David communicated with the Lord to put all the plans for the temple together. He would have



spent many hours in prayer and waiting on God for guidance and that time would have been incredibly precious. That is the real lesson in this example of David's life: if you want to serve and honour God: invest everything you've got in the time you spend with Him.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

"Then David sent for his son Solomon and instructed him to build a Temple for the Lord, the God of Israel. "My son, I wanted to build a Temple to honour the name of the Lord my God," David told him. "But the Lord said to me, 'You have killed many men in the battles you have fought. And since you have shed so much blood in my sight, you will not be the one to build a Temple to honour my name. But you will have a son who will be a man of peace. I will give him peace with his enemies in all the surrounding lands. His name will be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel during his reign. He is the one who will build a Temple to honour my name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will secure the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'

"Now, my son, may the Lord be with you and give you success as you follow his directions in building the Temple of the Lord your God. And may the Lord give you wisdom and understanding, that you may obey the Law of the Lord your God as you rule over Israel. For you will be successful if you carefully obey the decrees and regulations that the Lord gave to Israel through Moses. Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid or lose heart!" 1 Chronicles 22:6-13



How the Old and New Testaments Collide in David's Life

If there is any place within the Bible where the principles of the Old Testament (law) and New Testament (life in the Spirit) dovetail, it's in the life of King David. Regardless of his powers as the King of Isra'el, David lived much of his life in submission to God and guided by His Spirit. As a result, he was able to partially transcend the limits of the law, and live a life of spiritual wisdom which was a millennia out of the reach of others.

The laws handed down through Moses allowed punishment and retribution for sin. They functioned as scales of justice: if someone did wrong, they were paid back equally. While David often delivered punishment in alignment with the law, he was also able to "*let the Spirit renew [his] thoughts and attitudes and put on [a] new nature, created to be like God - truly righteous and holy.*" [Ref. Ephesians 4:23-24]

Until I began to study David, I presumed that such an esteemed warrior would rectify issues with any enemy by violence. I was wrong. David never engaged in needless violence which was outside the boundaries of the law (despite temptation to do otherwise as a young man in 1 Samuel 25), and in Psalm 37, David surprised me by saying this:

*"Be still in the presence of the Lord,
and wait patiently for him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.
Stop being angry!
Turn from your rage!
Do not lose your temper—
it only leads to harm.
For the wicked will be destroyed,
but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land."* Psalm 37:7-9



Even in our time, this is what we would consider an enlightened attitude. For the Old Testament, particularly when people wanted him dead, it's exceptional and an undeniable mark of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

While the Psalms are not in chronological order, Psalm 35 refers to attempts to usurp his Divinely ordained rule, which is a challenge which repeatedly threatened and worried King David, even into his old age. [Read Psalm 71 for more.]

*Psalm 35:7: "I did them no wrong, but they laid a trap for me.
I did them no wrong, but they dug a pit to catch me."
and verse 11: "Malicious witnesses testify against me.
They accuse me of crimes I know nothing about."*

David, being David, took these problems to the Lord, as other parts of Psalm 35 show.

*"O Lord, oppose those who oppose me.
Fight those who fight against me.
Put on your armour, and take up your shield.
Prepare for battle, and come to my aid.
Lift up your spear and javelin
against those who pursue me.
Let me hear you say,
"I will give you victory!"
Bring shame and disgrace on those trying to kill me;
turn them back and humiliate those who want to harm me.
Blow them away like chaff in the wind—*

*a wind sent by the angel of the Lord.
Make their path dark and slippery,
with the angel of the Lord pursuing them.
I did them no wrong, but they laid a trap for me.
I did them no wrong, but they dug a pit to catch me.
So let sudden ruin come upon them!
Let them be caught in the trap they set for me!
Let them be destroyed in the pit they dug for me.
Then I will rejoice in the Lord.
I will be glad because he rescues me.*" Psalm 35:1-9

Hold on, didn't I just say that David had adopted a nature that was beyond the limitations of law-based thinking? If I return to the book of Ephesians, verse 5:8b encourages us to "*live as people of the light.*" We are to live with love, speaking pleasantly and being thankful to God, and we are to "*carefully determine what pleases the Lord.*" [Ref. Ephesians 5:10] Requesting that our enemies be shamed and disgraced sounds nothing like that!

Listen to Psalm 37:3-9 and you will find the Spirit-led part of David, which later took over.

*"Trust in the Lord and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.
Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you your heart's desires.
Commit everything you do to the Lord.
Trust him, and he will help you.
He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,
and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.
Be still in the presence of the Lord,
and wait patiently for him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.
Stop being angry!
Turn from your rage!
Do not lose your temper—
it only leads to harm.
For the wicked will be destroyed,
but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land."*

That sounds more like, "*don't sin by letting anger control you.*" [Ref. Ephesians 4:26] So why does David undulate between Old Testament thinking and being led by the Holy Spirit? The answer is in Psalm 37:25:

*"Once I was young, and now I am old.
Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned
or their children begging for bread."*

With age comes experience. That creates wisdom and a desire to live in peace. That would account for part of David's change in attitude, but there is a second dynamic at work here. David died aged seventy. He'd been blessed with the Presence of the Holy Spirit since he was a teenager, and as the years unfolded, David had spent a great deal of time seeking the Lord, and learning from the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Heart had been able to sink in and radically modify his behaviour.

I have a great affection for the older David; the ageing father who was concerned about the young Solomon's ability to rule the nation, who was passionate about teaching the next generation of Hebrews about the Lord, poured his time into preparing for the temple which was to house the Ark of the Covenant and the Presence of God, and who died with an incredible grace, which made the

law look inadequate and incomplete. As we observe the United Nations Day of Peace this year, may we also adopt the same attitude that the Holy Spirit developed within David:

"Turn away from evil and do good.

Search for peace, and work to maintain it." Psalm 34:14



Our God is a Different God

Over the last few months I have been studying the ancient history of the Near East to get a handle on how the surrounding nations impacted King David's life. This is impossible to do without running into dozens and dozens and dozens of pagan deities. One thing that has struck me time and time again, is how radically different our God, YHWH, is compared to the other gods. Moses agrees with me: "*For what great nation has a god as near to them as the Lord our God is near to us whenever we call on Him? And what great nation has decrees and regulations as righteous and fair as this body of instructions that I am giving you today?*" Deuteronomy 4:7-8

Studying ancient history has shown me similarities between Biblical stories (*the flood) and how YHWH was worshipped, so how do I know that YHWH is the one true god? Because He is so distinctively unique.

Firstly, how do I account for the similarities in worship between Mesopotamia and Israel, which include blood sacrifice, the system for supporting priests; incense, music used in worship, the altars having horns, and the similarities in spiritual language? Scott Aniol from Answers in Genesis sums up what I was thinking beautifully: "*All nations had a common ancestry in Adam, and God's self-revelation was part of their heritage, thus accounting for any similarities in worship practice that exist.*" Worship stemmed from one God and one original system which was corrupted for man-made divinities. This form of corrupted worship in the Mesopotamian world remained in vogue for over four thousand years, and some practices (such as the fear of the number 13) still affect many world cultures today.

What is also interesting, is how the Laws that God gave through Moses seem to be put in place to stop the Israelites from copying many of the pagan practices of other religions. For example, the Israelites were told: "*A woman must not put on men's clothing, and a man must not wear women's clothing. Anyone who does this is detestable in the sight of the Lord your God.*" Deuteronomy 22:5 In some Mesopotamian ritual processions, the participants dressed half as men, half as women to worship their god. The more I study, the more I realise how much cultural information is lost to us, which sheds an entirely new light on Biblical precepts.

I could write a book on everything I have learned, but the main point I want to leave you with is how YHWH is a distinctive deity:

1. The Israelites could only have **one religious relic/artefact**, which was the Ark of the Covenant which had the manifest Presence of God upon it. Unlike polytheism, where there are many statues of a god made for every temple and need, there was no limit to the number. YHWH specifically banned the making of such images to represent Him. [Ref. Exodus 34:17]

2. YHWH is way above the average intelligence of other gods

Some Mesopotamians created statues of themselves praying that they could place in their temples to make their gods think they were being prayed to all the time, and the gods knew no difference. According to the Jewish Virtual Library: "*An idol, in the pagan mind, was a living and feeling being... The god's spirit dwelt within the idol and was identified with it. The god was not confined to a single idol or a single shape; rather his spirit dwelt within many idols of varied shapes. The god perceived and sensed whatever happened to its idol... The argument offered by the Psalmist (Ps. 106:36; 115:9), "they have eyes but they do not see" should be taken literally... The Biblical description of idolatry as "sacrifices to the dead," (Ps. 106:28) and of idols as "wood and stone," (Deut. 28:36, 64), and similar descriptions, challenge the pagan claim that the images they worshiped were in fact "living idols."*"

[Source: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0009_0_09475.html]

3. YHWH has exceptional moral character

"And Jehovah (YHWH) came down in the cloud. And he placed himself there with Him, and he called on the name of Jehovah. And Jehovah passed by before his face and called out: Jehovah! Jehovah God! Merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and great in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and not leaving entirely unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on sons, and on sons of sons, to the third and to the fourth generation." Exodus 34:5-7

God's were prone to the human traits of bitterness, revenge, theft, deception and basically, behaviour which is "fleshly." [Ref. Galatians 5:16-25] Pagan gods are recorded as viciously punishing their followers over hurt feelings, regardless of who was responsible. This was a way to account for the tragedies and baffling ups and downs of life.

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, King Gilgamesh refuses to marry the goddess Ishtar and reminds her of how she has abused the affection of her past lovers. In vengeance, she complains to her father, who at first says, "serves you right," but then: *"Ishtar opened her mouth and said again, 'My father, give me the Bull of Heaven to destroy Gilgamesh. Fill Gilgamesh, I say, with arrogance to his destruction; but if you refuse to give me the Bull of Heaven I will break in the doors of hell and smash the bolts; there will be confusion of people, those above with those from the lower depths. I shall bring up the dead to eat food like the living; and the hosts of dead will outnumber the living.' Anusa said to great Ishtar, 'If I do what you desire there will be seven years of drought throughout Uruk when corn will be seedless husks. Have you saved grain enough for the people and grass for the cattle? Ishtar replied. 'I have saved grain for the people, grass for the cattle; for seven years of seedless husks there is grain and there is grass enough.'*"

"She stirs confusion and chaos against those who are disobedient to her, speeding carnage and inciting the devastating flood, clothed in terrifying radiance. It is her game to speed conflict and battle, untiring, strapping on her sandals." Battle itself is sometimes referred to as "the dance of Inanna." [Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inanna>]

YHWH is not prone to such human faults and appalling acts of retribution. As we read in Exodus 34:5-7, He is open to reconciliation rather than murder. His people have to completely turn their back on Him before they are cursed.

4. YHWH is not dependent upon us to provide any of His needs. According to Mesopotamian mythology, human beings were created so the gods would have servants. *"Man shall be charged with the service of the gods, that they might be at ease."* Babylonian Creation myth.

While the Hebrews (later Israel,) served YHWH, it was by obedience and through worship, they didn't provide for His physical needs or were used and abused for His pleasure. To please Anu, you had to do the following (plus meet all the other requirements): "Several times a day in an elaborate ritual the god was served a sumptuous meal. The courses were set out before the statue of the god or goddess, music was played, and incense was sprinkled. Here is a daily menu for the god Anu at Uruk: 12 vessels of wine 2 vessels of milk, 108 vessels of beer, 243 loaves of bread, 29 bushels of dates, 21 rams, 2 bulls, 1 bullock, 8 lambs, 60 birds, 3 cranes, 7 ducks, 4 wild boars, 3 ostrich eggs, 3 duck eggs."

[Source: <http://www.dl.ket.org/humanities/connections/class/ancient/mesopreligion.htm>]

Instead, He meets ours! *"And He will love you, and bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your land, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your oxen and the wealth of your flock, in the land which He has sworn to your fathers, to give it to you. You shall be blessed above all people; there shall not be a barren man or a barren woman among you, nor among your livestock. And Jehovah shall turn aside every sickness from you; and*

He will not put on you any of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you have known, but He will put them on all who hate you.” Deuteronomy 7:13-15 Literal Translation of the Holy Bible

5. YHWH is accessible to all of His followers, not just the elite or the priests. “*The higher-echelon did all the preparation, and private individuals only came into contact with the gods when statues of deities were brought out of the temple and carried through the streets.*” [Source: <http://www.dl.ket.org/humanities/connections/class/ancient/mesopreligion.htm>]

6. YHWH cannot be controlled by man

“Since the god fully identified with its idol, whoever controlled the idol also controlled the god. When the king of Elam saw that he was about to be defeated by Sennacherib, he took his idols and fled in order that they [the idols] should not fall captive... The custom of taking captive the idols of the vanquished was ancient and widespread... Rab-Shakeh wanted to impress upon the people of Judah the fact that the gods of the neighbouring nations failed to protect them from the armies of Sennacherib .(Isa. 36:18–20; 37:10–12)

https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0009_0_09475.html

It was believed that once you had the idol, you controlled the god who would do your bidding if you appeased them. From there, any success would be possible. YHWH is completely resistant to manipulation. This is shown in Numbers 22 with Balaam who was ordered by the Moabite King, Balak, to curse the Israelites. “*But Balaam responded to Balak’s messengers, “Even if Balak were to give me his palace filled with silver and gold, I would be powerless to do anything against the will of the Lord [YHWH] my God.”*

7. YHWH is not a God who has to retreat.

When in enemies' hands, the power of the idol vanished. The vanquished kings would come and beg for the return of the idols; to return an idol to his temple was considered an act of mercy. Because of his fear of the enemy, the god would leave the idol "and fly to the heavens" Jeremiah 50:1–3 makes reference to this belief). [Source: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0009_0_09475.html]

Our God rules over all and has no need of retreat, and no fear of man as He showed when He delivered His people from Pharaoh in Exodus, which David acknowledged when he said: “*O Lord, there is no one like You. We have never even heard of another God like You! What other nation on earth is like Your people Israel? What other nation, O God, have You redeemed from slavery to be Your own people? You made a great name for Yourself when You redeemed Your people from Egypt. You performed awesome miracles and drove out the nations that stood in their way. You chose Israel to be Your very own people forever, and You, O Lord, became their God.*” 1 Chronicles 17:20-22

Conclusion: “*For who in all of heaven can compare with the Lord? What mightiest angel is anything like the Lord?*” [Psalm 89:6] How blessed we are.

NOTES

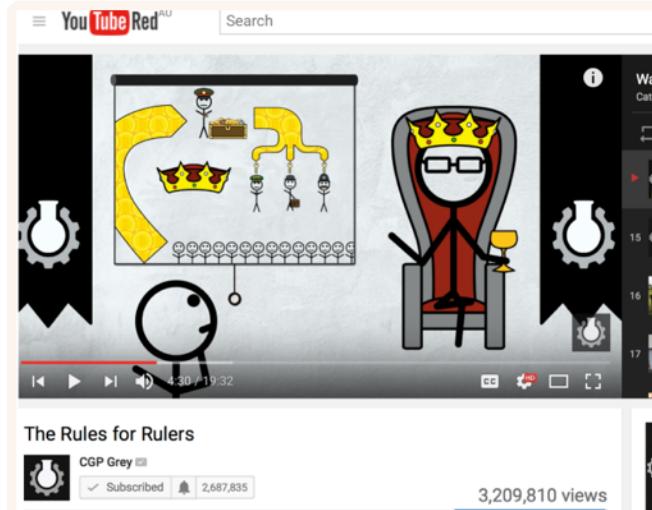
*Flood stories were recorded well after the event, so pagan cultures associated what occurred with their cultural beliefs at the time.



The Political Threats to David's Reign

Kings are more frequently surrounded by those who want power or favours, than genuine friends; and it can hard to find genuine supporters who aren't in your camp to reap some benefit. David was no exception.

CGP Grey sums up how precarious David's position was in his video, **"The Rules for Rulers." In order for any king to maintain power, he must have loyal supporters who he has adequately rewarded, (e.g. financially, in terms of status and by granting property,) otherwise anyone who can offer them a greater reward can amass enough support to overthrow them. This is why the unrighteous Joab, who had murdered Abner, was allowed to lead David's army after securing Jerusalem for David. He was a key and had to be rewarded rather than discarded, no matter how unsuitable he was. [Ref. 1 Samuel 3 and 1 Chronicles 11] An underpaid and under-appreciated army general could easily look the other way in an organised revolt, if promised a better deal from someone else. In 1 Kings 1, Joab did jump ship when he thought David was near to death, in order to ingratiate himself to the expected new king, Adonijah, and keep his status safe. That proved how shallow his loyalty really was.



There is plenty of evidence of dirty politics going on around David's palace, even though his court was made up mainly of members of his immediate and extended family in order to quell disputes. Aside from **Absalom's rebellion, here are some of the key issues which David's reign faced, which are reflected in the Psalms. (This is not an exhaustive list. There is the revolt of Sheba in 2 Samuel 20 which appears to have been prompted by his favouritism towards his own tribe, which is mentioned in 2 Samuel 19:41-43; hatred shown by Shimei in 2 Samuel 16:5-14 and the problems of a new king who didn't trust David which led to a war in 2 Samuel 10.)

USURP THREATS

The Psalms speak repeatedly of David being in danger as his position is coveted by others wanting power. This never stopped throughout his lifetime and had to be part of the reason why David held an illegal census in 2 Samuel 24. Being deeply fearful of being usurped and murdered was one of David's greatest fears and it was one which always left him extremely stressed. While David was a very strong, capable man, everyone has their achilles heel and this seems to be David's, which is understandable. If he'd been killed, the perpetrator would also have killed his entire family and many of his supporters, so there was a lot of responsibility on him.

From the time that Saul tried to arrest David in his home, to the time when David handed the throne of Isra'el over to Solomon, the danger never ended. That period covers over fifty years.

*"And now, [Lord] in my old age, don't set me aside.
Don't abandon me when my strength is failing.
For my enemies are whispering against me.
They are plotting together to kill me.
They say, "God has abandoned him."*

*Let's go and get him,
for no one will help him now.” Psalm 71:9-11*

BRIBERY ATTEMPTS

*“Hear me, Lord, my plea is just;
listen to my cry.
Hear my prayer—
it does not rise from deceitful lips.
Let my vindication come from You;
may Your eyes see what is right.
Though You probe my heart,
though You examine me at night and test me,
You will find that I have planned no evil;
my mouth has not transgressed.
Though people tried to bribe me,
I have kept myself from the ways of the violent
through what Your lips have commanded.
My steps have held to Your paths;
my feet have not stumbled.
I call on You, my God, for You will answer me;
turn Your ear to me and hear my prayer.
Show me the wonders of Your great love,
You who save by Your right hand
those who take refuge in You from their foes.
Keep me as the apple of Your eye;
hide me in the shadow of Your wings
from the wicked who are out to destroy me,
from my mortal enemies who surround me.” Psalm 17:1-9*



A king who rules under the law of the Lord will fall foul of ungodly men, and this would have been a constant challenge to David. Pulling them into line would put David’s life at risk again, as they would want him removed to save their position and increase their power. There are a number of verses which speak of corruption among Isra’el’s leaders.

*“Justice—do you rulers know the meaning of the word?
Do you judge the people fairly?
No! You plot injustice in your hearts.
You spread violence throughout the land.” Psalm 58:1-2*

THEFT ALLEGATIONS

*“Save me, O God,
for the floodwaters are up to my neck.
Deeper and deeper I sink into the mire;
I can’t find a foothold.
I am in deep water,
and the floods overwhelm me.
I am exhausted from crying for help;
my throat is parched.
My eyes are swollen with weeping,
waiting for my God to help me.
Those who hate me without cause
outnumber the hairs on my head.*

***Many enemies try to destroy me with lies,
demanding that I give back what I didn't steal.***" Psalm 69:1-4

I have no idea what incident this referred to, but David's words speak clearly enough. If you want to replace a king, create a scandal which will discredit him enough to lose his popularity with the people. Think about how much rumour and malice occurs in the short reign of a modern politician. How much more garbage can go down over a forty year reign? There must be far more to David's story than has been recorded.

DAVID'S REACTIONS: THE CENSUS

All these factors could have contributed to why David ordered an illegal Census in 1 Chronicles 21, so he knew how many able bodied men could be called into service. The events leading up to the Census aren't clear. 2 Samuel 24 talk about a drought, and before that, there was the revolt of Sheba which some scholars attribute David's decision to take a census to. In 1 Chronicles 21 the preceding event is the war with the Ammonites which had been a very hard won victory, but which had appeared back in 2 Samuel 10. The cause may be something which just isn't mentioned in our Bibles at all.

2 Samuel 24:1 says, "*Once again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he caused David to harm them by taking a census. "Go and count the people of Israel and Judah," the Lord told him.*" and 1 Chronicles 21:1 says, "*Satan rose up against Israel and caused David to take a census of the people of Israel.*" It seems like God, Satan and David were all unhappy with Israel, but it was David's choice to resist temptation and do the right thing. This was the only area where he acted like Saul and gave into fear and anger.

DAVID'S REACTIONS: THE PSALMS

As always David turns to his greatest weapon to deal with these problems: prayer and praise. Over time, he seemed to have worked out how to deal with these stresses better. In Psalm 39:1-5 he speaks of learning to hold his tongue and in Psalm 37 he encourages us by saying:

*"Commit everything you do to the Lord.
Trust him, and He will help you.
He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,
and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.
Be still in the presence of the Lord,
and wait patiently for Him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.
Stop being angry!
Turn from your rage!
Do not lose your temper—
it only leads to harm.
For the wicked will be destroyed,
but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land."* Psalm 37:5-9

He also determined to deliberately stay away from bad influences. Psalm 101:2-7

*"I will be careful to lead a blameless life—
when will you come to me?
I will conduct the affairs of my house
with a *blameless heart. (*integrity, perfect)
I will not look with approval
on anything that is vile. (evil, wicked, base)
I hate what *faithless people do; (*those who fall away or turn away from God)*

*I will have no part in it. (won't cleave to)
 The *perverse of heart shall be far from me; (*devious, perverted, evil, fraudulent)
 I will have nothing to do with what is evil.
 Whoever slanders their neighbour in secret,
 I will put to silence;
 whoever has haughty eyes and a proud
 heart,
 I will not tolerate.
 My eyes will be on the faithful in the land,
 that they may dwell with me;
 the one whose walk is blameless
 will minister to me.
 No one who practices deceit
 will dwell in my house;
 no one who speaks falsely
 will stand in my presence.”*



David has the final word on how to handle the chaos in this Psalm:

*“I wait quietly before God,
 for my victory comes from Him.
 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
 my fortress where I will never be shaken.” Psalm 62:1-2 (Cross reference Psalm 131:2)*

NOTES

- *The Rules for Rulers <https://youtu.be/rStL7niR7gs> Based on “The Dictators Handbook” by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita & Alastair Smith “Why Bad Behaviour is Almost Always Good Politics.” The second video in the series Death and Dynasties is also helpful for understanding David’s position. https://youtu.be/ig_qpNfXHIU
- **Absalom: 2 Samuel chapters 13-18 recount Absalom’s story. For an explanation of Absalom’s mental status (sociopathic), please read this article: <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32723>



When No One Can Agree on David

I get frustrated and angry when I see Christians arguing over aspects of David's life; it seems that no one can agree on anything. It's more than disagreeing, it's the outright contempt and disrespect towards other's opinions which I see from time to time, that really gets to me, and worse than that, it stops people from getting the full benefit of the Word of God.

I understand that some Christians haven't thought Scripture through, or have come to a poor conclusion from accessing a limited amount of information, but when the ego-propelled knives come out, I unplug. At the moment I don't follow or participate in any Christian groups online, which is a shame, but I can really do without the fighting.



Through nature, the Lord has given us a beautiful vision of how He wants us to work together. In the deep oceans are creatures called siphonophores. They appear to be one organism, but they are not. They are a colony of hundreds, or thousands of organisms, which are all joined together and work together for survival. Some propel the colony along, some catch food and ensure that all are fed, some have stingers which catch prey. They are majestic, beautiful and a stunning example of how we are supposed to be: one united group with our individual gifts, which should be carried out for the benefit of the whole. As Paul said:

"For even as we have many members in one body, and all members do not have the same function, so we the many are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another. Then having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us... Let love be without hypocrisy, shrinking from evil, cleaving to good; in brotherly love to one another, loving fervently, having led one another in honour. As to diligence, not slothful, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord..." Romans 12:4-6a and 9-11

The New Living Translation represents verses 9 and 10 even better: *"Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honouring each other."*

This is where we fall apart. We are so caught up in pride, wanting our opinion to be the only one; craving having our interpretation of Scripture to be the only endorsed correct one, that we walk all over each other, and give Christianity a poor reputation... even to other Christians.

I also see these traits in other religions and scientific disciplines. Where there are two people, there seems to be a power struggle, whatever the topic. There is, however, a cure for this.

"Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love." Ephesians 4:2

"Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8

"One day Jesus said to his disciples, "There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting! It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall into sin. So watch yourselves! If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive. Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive." Luke 17:1-4

"You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment. You shall not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but you shall judge your neighbour in righteousness. You shall not go as a slanderer among your people; you shall not stand against the blood of your neighbour. I am Jehovah. You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall always rebuke your neighbour, and not allow sin on him. You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people; but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am Jehovah." Leviticus 19:15-18

So if someone drives you nuts, or you totally don't agree with them, at least hear their point of view, respectfully share yours and don't let your fleshly ego win. Who knows, there may be something important you can learn from each other? Regardless, any act of loving kindness you make towards anyone is always a righteous decision.



The Deep Ancient Roots the Psalms Sprang From

Regardless of what age or nationality you are, the culture around you will affect how you worship. Old Western hymns were set to popular tunes of the day so that people would relate to them, and edifying Christian hip hop and rap music is popular with Christian youth in our current time.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with this. Jesus communicated His message in a form which people understood and could relate to. It makes perfect sense. However, when studying the ancient history of the Near East (pre-Abraham), I was surprised at how much some of the cultic hymns sounded like David's Psalms.

Compare these two:

*"Mighty, majestic, and radiant,
You shine brilliantly in the evening,
You brighten the day at dawn,
You stand in the heavens like the sun and the moon,
Your wonders are known both above and below..."*

*"The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;
where morning dawns, where evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy."*

Who wrote what? The first one is a Sumerian hymn about Inanna (Ishtar,) the pagan 'Queen of Heaven;' the second is part of David's Psalm 65. Did that leave you with an awful feeling in the pit of your stomach? I was startled, then realised that this point of time is so far back, both David and the writer of the hymn had the same roots: they both originally came from the one God, YHWH. Psalms by the Sons of Korah and Ethan the Ezrahite (Psalm 89) have the same features. It's simply a cultural way of song writing.

"The key elements of worship that appear in most religions are instituted in the first few chapters of Genesis. God places Adam and Eve in his sanctuary as priests who serve him and commune with him. After they disobey him, God institutes the idea of substitutionary sacrifice and atonement, establishing a covenant with them. Each of these elements characterises the worship of all religions since they are part of the religious heritage of all children of Adam. As Rodríguez notes, "those religious expressions belong to the common human experience of God" (Rodríguez 2001, 47). Romans 1:19–20 testifies to this when it says that God has revealed himself to all people through "the things that have been made." [Source: Worldview Bias and the Origin of Hebrew Worship by Scott Aniol, source link below.]



There is a major difference between the way that David approaches his God and the way the worshippers of the pagan god, Inanna worshipped: David has confidence!

*"Be merciful to me, O Lord; for I cry to You daily.
Give joy to the soul of Your servant; for to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
For You, Lord, are good and ready to forgive, and rich in mercy to all those who call on You.
Give ear, O Jehovah, to my prayer; and attend to the voice of my prayers.
In the day of my trouble I will call on You; for You will answer me." Psalm 86:3-7*

You don't find that kind of confidence in hymns for the pagan gods. From the ones I read, some of them don't even make any kind of sense, but David had two things in his favour: the indwelling Spirit of God which gave him a direct link to the one true God, and a righteous boldness. He knew that God was with him and that YHWH was his source of comfort, deliverance, healing, joy and

salvation. David was welcome to "boldly approach the throne of grace," long before those words appeared in our New Testament. [Ref. Hebrews 4:16 and Ephesians 3:12]

*"The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out,
"Yahweh! The Lord!
The God of compassion and mercy!
I am slow to anger
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.
I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations.
I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.
But I do not excuse the guilty."* Exodus 34:6-7a



Inanna had to be appeased, tip toed around. The pagan gods were the scapegoats that man made to explain the mysteries of why bad things happen and how the natural elements of the world functioned. They created jealous, angry gods with human frailties, who you bribed into happiness so nothing went wrong.

Looking at hymns which came from a different part of the Near East, Scott Aniol goes on to say: *"When comparing the psalms of Israel with those of Ugarit people, important distinctions emerge as well. According to Walton, "the category of declarative praise is unique to Israel"... Biblical history and pagan myth have very different purposes, functions, and literary forms and therefore must not be interpreted in the same manner."*

The same applies to cultic observations about a flood and a baby sent down a river in a basket who was rescued by a princess and bought up in a royal court. The events were written about long after they happened, with the then current pagan interpretations added.

So if you ever come across strange similarities between paganism and the Bible, don't take them as evidence that your faith isn't based on a faithful, genuine God.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:1-5

NOTES

- <https://answersingenesis.org/presuppositions/bias-and-origin-of-hebrew-worship/> This is a great article, please take the time to read it.
- *"Inanna was associated with the planet Venus, which at that time was regarded as two stars, the "morning star" and the "evening star. The discontinuous movements of Venus relate to both mythology as well as Inanna's dual nature. Inanna is related like Venus to the principle of connectedness, but this has a dual nature and could seem unpredictable. Yet as both the goddess of love and war, with both masculine and feminine qualities, Inanna is poised to respond, and occasionally to respond with outbursts of temper. Mesopotamian literature takes this one step further, explaining Inanna's physical movements in mythology as corresponding to the astronomical movements of Venus in the sky." There are hymns to Inanna as her astral manifestation."* [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inanna>]



David, The Lonely Shepherd: Myth or Reality?

The life of a shepherd can be portrayed as a romanticised, low demand, idyllic one. I didn't realise how much, until someone left this comment on an article I'd put on the King David Project's Facebook page: "*...alone as a shepherd spending a lot of time with the Lord in isolation.*"

Without thinking too deeply, I questioned that view: "*Actually, it is not known how much of that time was alone. It would be ridiculous to leave a young teenager alone in charge of a valuable herd, so it's possible that his brothers, or hired men, were with him.*" The commenter agreed on the basis that in Luke, the angels visited groups of shepherds to announce Jesus' birth. They weren't alone. That verse was where I'd sourced my response from too.

The more I thought about it, the more I realised that to put a young teenager alone in a dangerous place with an incredibly valuable flock, in any era, was just nuts! Jesus talked about robbers who took sheep. David battled a lion and bear to protect his flock, and when he met Abigail, he, as an armed man with a band of other armed men, were working protecting Nabal's flocks in the wilderness of Maon. [Ref: 1 Samuel 25]

I started to research whether or not isolated shepherding was normal in David's time, to see if this was another misunderstanding of David's story, which needed to be addressed. *'Manners and Customs of Bible Lands' was very helpful. "*The youngest boy in the family becomes shepherd of the sheep... As the older son grows up he transfers his energies from sheep raising to helping the father with sowing, ploughing, and harvesting the crops, and passes on the shepherd's task to the next younger boy. And so the job is passed from older to younger until the youngest of all becomes the family shepherd.*" What is missing is the age at which the youngest son took that job.

The volume of shepherd imagery in the Bible is a clue as to the importance of shepherding to everyone. Jesus repeatedly uses sheep analogies, as the value of sheep was still critical to the economy and welfare of Isra'el in His time. Sheep were both a potential source of income and a means of meeting the most basic needs, such as providing wool for clothes, sheepskin for coats, meat for feasts, special occasions and sacrifices; plus milk to make into cheese, and rams horns for carrying liquid, or to be used as a shofar.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia (1915 - 1988) points out that that to slaughter a sheep to feed a guest was "*generous hospitality*" and use of a sheep as a sacrifice was very expensive. It also goes on to say, "*That a shepherd might not return alive from his shepherding was well understood. (Genesis 37:33) Shepherding was serious, demanding and strenuous work. Nevertheless, the true or faithful shepherd was thought to have a disposition that was altogether admirable: thoughtful, tender, gentle, strong, resourceful in times of danger...*"

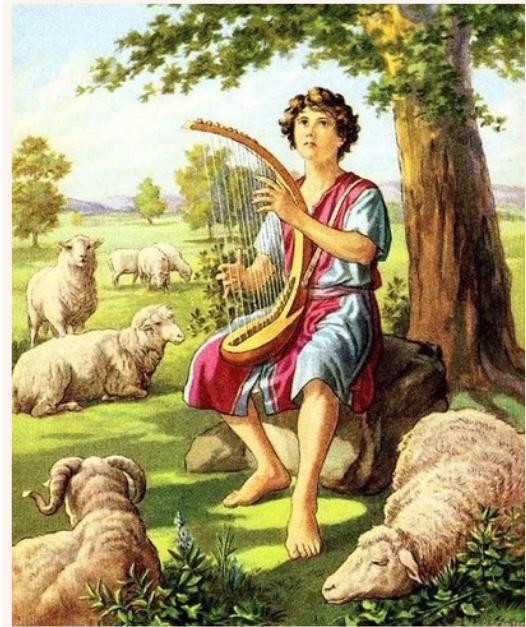
This confirms how dangerous the position was and again I ask, would you entrust your precious flock to one person?

In John 10:13, we learn that people were hired to assist in flock care. Back to * 'Bible Customs...': "*When the flock is small, the shepherd handles his sheep without any help but if the flock becomes too large, then it becomes necessary for him to hire someone to help him with the sheep. One man can usually handle from fifty to one hundred sheep, but when he has more than one hundred, he usually seeks a helper.*"

In 1 Samuel 17, it says, "*One day Jesse said to David, "Take this basket of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread, and carry them quickly to your brothers."*" then in verse 20 it says, "*So David left the sheep with another shepherd and set out early the next morning with the gifts, as Jesse had directed him.*" So who was this other shepherd? Did this mean David wasn't alone?

The sheep could have been watched by another shepherd who had their own flock in the same vicinity. They may, or may not have been family. [Example: Genesis 29:1-3] For safety, and probably company, shepherds intermingled and associated with each other, especially at night. It sounds like the lonely shepherd myth is busted, doesn't it? Actually, I don't know. I have no idea how wealthy Jesse was, or the flock size, or what really went on.

There is one indicator of the possible number of sheep in 1 Samuel 17: 28. *"But when David's oldest brother, Eliab, heard David talking to the men (asking about Goliath on the battlefield), he was angry. "What are you doing around here anyway?" he demanded. "What about those few sheep you're supposed to be taking care of? I know about your pride and deceit. You just want to see the battle!"*



That Scripture verse could be a clue as to the flock size, but it also sounds like Eliab may have been indulging in sibling rivalry and exaggeration. *"What have I done now?" David replied. "I was only asking a question!"* Consider this: David's brothers know that he's been anointed by Samuel to be King of Isra'el, and was chosen over them. How would you expect older brothers to react to that? It's highly likely that they assailed David with their ruffled feathers, carrying out one of the Devil's favourite assaults: making us question God's will and our worth. "It can never happen; you're too young, you're not worthy. Who do you think you are?" Doesn't he do that to all of us? Thus, I place no faith in the accuracy of Eliab's statement.

* 'Bible Customs...' gives us one last helpful clue as to whether or not this time shaped David's spiritual life. *"The shepherd is so constantly with his sheep that sometimes his life with them becomes monotonous."* Even if David was rarely lonely, monotony could certainly have lead him to spending time with the Lord and it leaves time for David to hone his musical craft.

The lesson I learnt from trying to squash a myth was this: we need to study the Word carefully to do it justice. So much information has not been written down, or has been lost in time, that getting to the roots of people's motivation and experiences becomes impossible. However, if we take the time to study the Word in detail, (not just rely on commentaries, or our memories of a story,) we can come up with helpful new revelations. This study was not a wild goose chase for me. I learned more about what Jesus was trying to get across to us, and I understood the foundational training that built David so much better. It was an investigation well worth the time.

REFERENCES

- * Manners and Customs of Bible Lands by Fred H. Wight, Copyright 1953 Read it here: <http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=qDQAYzDf0WM%3D>
- The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Copyright 1915 - 1988, William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Volume 4, Page 463-4 "sheep / shepherd"



What the Torah Taught David About the Love of God

It's not easy to keep your faith level high while experiencing this kind of chaotic stress:

*"O Lord, how long will You forget me? Forever?
How long will You look the other way?
How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul,
with sorrow in my heart every day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?
Turn and answer me, O Lord my God!
Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.
Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, "We have defeated him!"
Don't let them rejoice at my downfall.
But I trust in Your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because You have rescued me.
I will sing to the Lord
because He is good to me."* Psalm 13

Like all of us, David struggled with his relationship with the Lord when the heat was turned up. Through a haze of stress and fear, he wondered where the Lord had gotten to. At times, as was the culture of the era, he took God's silence as possible rejection and fretted over what would become of him. Had he been judged as so sinful that God had walked away? Thankfully, his problems always end with God's hoped for deliverance arriving, and a deeper, richer understanding of God's love and character.

David didn't have the entire Old Testament and the New Testament to teach him what we know about God. All he had was the written laws of Moses and the stories of Isra'el's history (Torah), yet he had an incredible, dynamic faith that has stood the test of time as a powerful example to others. So without Jesus as the prime example, how did he know about the full character of God?

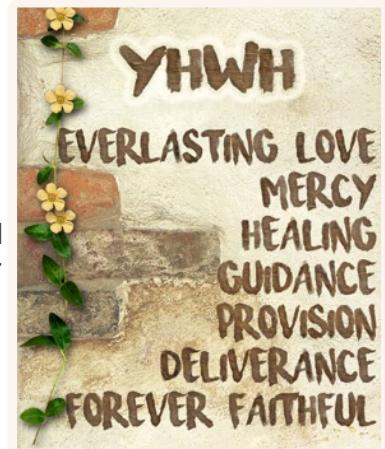
I have made the mistake of thinking of the Torah as a historical reference. Until I began to write this article, I hadn't properly looked at what those books tell us about the character of God. I prefer to read about the love and gentleness of Jesus, rather than about battles and plagues. I enjoy reading Paul's letters: *"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 8:35-39.

As I began to search for clues about God's character in the Torah, I Googled Scriptures about the love of God. The Open Bible.info gave me a list of 59, with only one coming from the Torah. [Ref. Exodus 19:5] With the exception of a few Psalms, which were written by David so they don't count, the rest of the love Scriptures came into being well after David's time. They are the ones I am familiar with and rely on, so no wonder I hadn't dug back further.
[https://www.openbible.info/topics/gods_love_for_us]

The answer is God's loving kindness has been repeatedly, clearly displayed since Genesis 1. The Torah is as rich in references to God's amazing love as the New Testament. Here are some examples:

- Despite the catastrophe, God physically looked after Adam and Eve after they had sinned. [Ref. Genesis 3:21]
- Noah was saved from the flood and God made a covenant with him, because God's people are too important to be left behind. [Ref. Genesis chapters 6-9]
- Abraham was a friend of God. He was saved from being childless and "God had blessed him in every way," by the time he was an old man. [Ref. Genesis 12-24]

- God dried tears and generously provided basic needs in life for his people, such as **wives** and He reversed **barrenness** in faithful women such as Rebecca, in Genesis 25. God's kindness to a grieving **Hagar** is another beautiful picture of compassion combined with a practical solution. [Ref. Genesis 21]
- The deliverance and blessing of **Joseph** speaks volumes about God's kindness and guard, not to mention his plan for us as individuals. No matter how awful life got, he never left Joseph down on his luck for long. [Ref. Genesis 37-50]
- In ***Exodus**, God delivered Isra'el from Egypt because He heard their pain. In the wilderness they were supplied with every spiritual and physical need, despite their rebellion, and they were promised that God would delight in them. [Ref. Deuteronomy 30:9-10] This includes food, water, healing, **conquering their enemies miraculously multiple times, being physically present with them and more. Even the ten commandments are loving safety guidelines for a people who'd been subject only to pagan gods and rituals, and needed to learn how to live better lives. [Ref. Exodus 20]
Deuteronomy 4:31: "*For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath.*"



- In Leviticus 26:1-13 God promises to **live among** His people and walk among them. He isn't in Heaven looking down, He lived and moved alongside man. At this time in history, every other nation was trying to placate their gods, who they were terrified of.
- **Moses'** close friendship with God is a beautiful example of God's willingness to form a bond with His people. This is highlighted in Exodus 33:33:12-23. In Exodus 34:5-7, God describes Himself to Moses including, "*I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations.*"
- God's patience is shown in the book of **Judges** again and again, and again, as Isra'el repeatedly rebels. In Deuteronomy 28, God sets out the curses of disobedience and gives the people five massive, staged warnings to turn back to Him; then even when they have completely rejected God and have been torn away from their birthright, He says, "*But despite all this, I will not utterly reject or despise them while they are in exile in the land of their enemies. I will not cancel my covenant with them by wiping them out, for I am the Lord their God. For their sakes I will remember my ancient covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of all the nations, that I might be their God. I am the Lord.*" Leviticus 26:44-45 and Deuteronomy 4:29-31 "*But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the Lord your God and obey Him. For the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which He confirmed to them by oath.*"

As I said above, this is not an exhaustive list. How can David have known all these stories and not known the love of God? He can't and he didn't.

"Remember, O Lord, your compassion and unfailing love, which you have shown from long ages past." Psalm 25:6

*"Let all that I am praise the Lord;
with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.
Let all that I am praise the Lord;
may I never forget the good things he does for me.
He forgives all my sins
and heals all my diseases.
He redeems me from death*

*and crowns me with love and tender mercies.
He fills my life with good things.
My youth is renewed like the eagle's!
...He does not punish us for all our sins;
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.
For his unfailing love toward those who fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.
He has removed our sins as far from us
as the east is from the west." Psalm 103:1-5 and 10-12*

That Psalm repeats the entire message of the Torah, which is that God was in an active, covenant relationship with His people which He will never discard. That relationship is still not complete and never will be. God will always fight for and provide for His people with a fierce, jealous love and David knew he was wanted, treasured, provided for and sought after; the problems with his walk with God only showed up... when his judgement was smothered by pain.

So next time you feel discouraged, or like God has abandoned you, don't beat yourself up over your lack of faith. We all go through it, including spiritual giants like David. Fear and grief take over and dominate our thoughts, and we don't reason straight. However, like David, we will also get through it. He always has been there for His people and He is not about to leave us now, no matter what...

NOTES

*Exodus 19:1-6: "*On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day —they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."*"

**The battles God fought for Isra'el, up until David's time, which would have served as an example to him.

- Crossing the Red Sea - Exodus 14
- Victory over the Amalekites - Exodus 17:8-16
- Promise to fight for the people - Exodus 23:27-31 and Deuteronomy 7:7-8
- Jordan River dry crossing - Joshua 3:15-16
- Fall of Jericho - Joshua 6:20-21
- Ai - Joshua 8
- Amonites - Joshua 10:11
- North captured for Isra'el - Joshua 11:16-20, especially verse 23
- South captured for Isra'el - Joshua 10:40-42
- Deborah and Barak - Judges 4:14-15
- Gideon - Judges 7
- Samson - Judges 16, especially verse 30
- Ark of the Covenant against the Philistines - 1 Samuel 7
- Saul's first battle, against King Nahash of Ammon - 1 Samuel 11
- Jonathan against the Philistines - 1 Samuel 14



When Kings Normally Go To War:

Addressing A Potentially Unjustified Criticism of David

This article used to be included in Did King David Have Diabetes? It is a connected issue, but it has become sensible to split the topics, as my study is constantly leading me to enlarge on this area.

2 Samuel 11:1 says: "*In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites.*" This is typically taken as a criticism of David, and used as a means to warn us that idle hands make the Devil's work. However, there is also a strong possibility that this verse is a time marker, rather than a criticism.

While we look back on life in David's time as being far simpler, we know that the work of a King was as demanding as it is in modern times. 1000 BC was not the stone age. Kings didn't only look after the security of their country, striding into war to fight heroic battles. Archaeology tells us that from at the very least, 1500 years before David, administration, record keeping, civil works and diplomatic activity was well established in David's area of the world. He did not have the luxury of being an idle King, and if the records of the Kings of Judah were still in existence, there would be mountains of 'paperwork' to back that up.

It was not King David's custom to attend to smaller battles and as a king, it was his right to choose not to at his discretion. Delegation is considered a wise leadership strategy and handing smaller military actions off to Joab, does not immediately make David's actions erroneous. Unless he was needed for morale or strategy, his time may have been better used in Jerusalem; David may have been more derelict of duty to go to war than keep the country in order, depending on what was happening in Isra'el at that time.

There are also other possibilities. We do not have the full details of how his army was ordered. Was he waiting to be called in with a reinforcement division? Was he needed for security within the Jerusalem area? Or could David staying home have been because he was ill and thus, too greater liability on the battlefield at that time? [Several years later, his men force him off the battlefield permanently, as he is weak and tired. Ref: 2 Samuel 21:15-17]

A realistic view of David's involvements in battle is presented in the introduction to Psalm 60. At times, Joab and the army went out without David to begin or finish a battle, and this was normal and acceptable. "...and Joab returned and killed 12,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt." Again, in 2 Samuel 2:12-17, Joab takes the army of Judah (David's forces) into battle against northern Isra'el without David. I have not found any Biblical criticism of these actions.

The battle which the text is focussed on, had started in 2 Samuel 10. Joab took command of the first part, then in 10:6,7 when the Ammonites called in more reinforcements, David left for battle with more of his men. Cleaning up the entire mess took some time.

From Albert Barne's commentary: "*The language in the title "when Joab returned," would seem to imply that these conquests were achieved not by David in person, but by Joab - a circumstance not at all improbable, as he was the leader of the armies of David; 2 Samuel 20:23, "Now Joab was over all the host of Israel."* ...*in the title to the psalm where it is ascribed to Joab, for though the battle may have been fought by Joab, yet it was really one of the victories of David, as Joab acted under him and by his orders - as we speak of the conquests of Napoleon, attributing to him the conquests which were secured by the armies under his command.*"

Nelsons New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs: "*Critics sometimes charge that David's remaining in Jerusalem during the Ammonite war constituted a dereliction of duty. And he got into trouble with Bathsheba for shirking that duty. But that is not necessarily true. Kings did not always*

lead their forces into war... Moreover, the autocratic kings of the ancient Near East had so much administrative detail to attend to at home that they could not always handle both military and domestic affairs adequately."

The biggest problem in understanding King David's life is that there is so much detail and not enough detail! Explanations are housed in words which are easily missed in the text; plus as chapters sit end to end, timing is lost. The initial main purpose of writing this article was to encourage you to think outside the box on what circumstances and influences affected David. Human behaviour is complex, and from observing the events in our own life, we know that nothing is ever as cut and dried as it seems. One innocent incident can lead us into trouble, or we can cut a hard path to sin for ourselves by making poor choices. In the same way that we would want to be given the benefit of the doubt in regards to what led to our mistakes, David deserves the same open-minded treatment.



NOTES

- King David's Health: Diabetes, VD and his Probable Cause of Death <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32037>
- Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes, © 1834
- Nelsons New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs, Dr Howard E Vos, © 1999



When You Don't Know What to Say: How to Help the Hurting

I have been a social worker for thirty years and often, I don't know how to comfort people. How silly does that sound? Because I have hurt deeply, when I see others in unbearable pain, I am reminded how inadequate words are. I understand how platitudes and cheerleading attempts fall flat. It's because trying to make things better, or cheer someone up, does not acknowledge the depth of their pain.

It's easy for all of us to retreat behind walls and rely on tired old phrases. "I wish I had the answers, but I don't." "Just keep trusting God." That approach only leaves both parties feeling sadder and nothing gets better. So what is the cure for when you don't know what to say? Here are the three most effective answers I know.

1. **Just be there**, listen and allow crying, hysteria and all manner of scary and awful reactions to come out, as that promotes healing.

2. **Let them know they are not alone**... Not just then. Ring them a day later, then a week later and then in another week and stick with them until they know they are NOT alone, even when everyone else expects them to be over it. Hurting people need to know that at least one person understands that healing is rarely fast, and that someone is still there for them.

3. **Absorb the Psalms / Word of God, on the deepest level you can.** Since I started studying David, that the black times are easier to cope with, as now I spend my comfort-seeking time in the Psalms. I go to David: the regular guy, who found himself in an extraordinary set of situations and who suffered the most appalling persecution, health problems, family issues and threats against him, for years and years and years... and came out happy, blessed and the right way up.

The Psalms are where we can hear someone who hurts like we hurt and does not minimise suffering, or use trite phrases. You'll find comfort in relating to David's pain and honesty, and then he'll always send you straight back into the safety and healing that can only be found in the arms of God.

David has become my role model, not because he had a bag of magical answers, as he didn't. What he did do, was constantly go back to the Lord in prayer, praise, study, submission and fasting, no matter what, and he made himself focus on the positive when it seemed impossible to. He is infectious. He will teach you how to float peacefully in the shark pool, by pulling you out of yourself, showing you a better way to manage your hurts, and he'll teach you to fully engage with the loving heart of God.

I recommend that you read the Psalms so often, they get into your DNA. They will change how you think, react and cope with adversity. Read them until you dream them, wake up thinking about them and they inch their way into your mind at other times, during the day. Also try listening to Christian music which is heavily based on, or quotes the Psalms. That has helped me a lot. The Psalms were originally sung and it makes them much easier to remember.

The Psalms are the living, active Word of God with the power to comfort, heal and deliver and they WILL. Just give it time. The Word of God will never fail you.



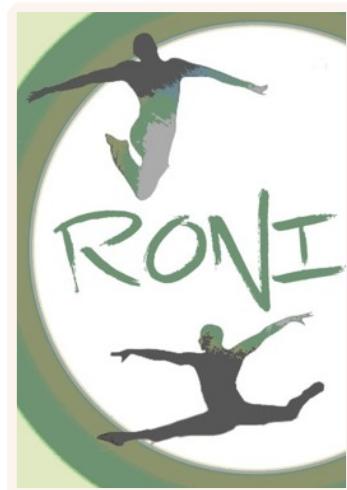
Why David Taught Through Psalms / Songs

Music is an essential part of the life of nearly every culture on earth. The first thing a baby hears in the womb is the rhythm of their mother's heartbeat, then as children grow they respond to lullabies and rhymes. In every form of celebration and life event we have music; from Christmas carols, to the birthday song, to funerals. Melody is part of the way we learn about and relate to our culture and it helps us to feel part of our community, as it reinforces our values and identity. Is it any wonder then, that many spiritual principles in the Bible were communicated through the Psalms, which were sung?

The first Psalm song was written not by David, but by Moses as a song of joy, when God had delivered Israel from Egypt.

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord:

*"I will sing to the Lord,
for He has triumphed gloriously;
He has hurled both horse and rider
into the sea.
The Lord is my strength and my song;
He has given me victory.
This is my God, and I will praise Him—
my Father's God, and I will exalt Him!
The Lord is a warrior;
Yahweh is His Name!
Pharaoh's chariots and army
He has hurled into the sea.
The finest of Pharaoh's officers
are drowned in the Red Sea.
The deep waters gushed over them;
they sank to the bottom like a stone..." Exodus 15*



That song is still sung as a testimony of God's love, power and deliverance, today. I first learned a version of it in church twenty years ago.

The second Psalm Moses wrote was on God's instruction. It's purpose was sad.

*"The Lord said to Moses, "You are about to die and join your ancestors. After you are gone, these people will begin to worship foreign gods, the gods of the land where they are going. They will abandon Me and break My covenant that I have made with them. Then My anger will blaze forth against them. I will abandon them, hiding My Face from them, and they will be devoured. Terrible trouble will come down on them, and on that day they will say, 'These disasters have come down on us because God is no longer among us!' At that time I will hide My Face from them on account of all the evil they commit by worshiping other gods.
"So write down the words of this song, and teach it to the people of Israel. Help them learn it, so it may serve as a witness for Me against them..." So that very day Moses wrote down the words of the song and taught it to the Israelites." (Deuteronomy chapters 31-32 contain the full song.)*

These Psalms built on a wider cultural tradition which started centuries before Abraham lived in Mesopotamia, and which probably reaches back to the dawn of mankind. There are a number of pagan hymns to gods such as Ishtar, which have been found in the Mesopotamian area (modern Iraq.) Some use similar literary devices and strength imagery that David used in the Psalms, which further shows that the Israelites were connected to and influenced by a larger cultural community which thrived on music, as we do today.

Regardless of which time period you live in, it is normal for spiritual activities to be accompanied by music, which build a unified spiritual community and teach devotees their core ideas and values. David followed Moses in using this powerful medium, not just because it was the way things were done and because he liked music, but also as King David knew the impact it had upon people. The introduction to Psalm 60 says, "... A psalm of David useful for teaching, regarding the time David fought Aram-naharaim and Aram-zobah..." Psalms enabled David to *teach the people his testimony of God's deliverance, reiterate the history of Israel and remind them of the principles of God's Laws which were handed down through Moses. [Ref. Psalms 114 and 132]

Consider these factors which make music an effective teaching method:

- A catchy tune will be remembered and enables messages from a leader to be passed on across any distance.
- Every age is open to hearing and learning musically. Small children will remember and repeat lyrics whether they understand the message or not. There is no age where enjoying music stops.
- Popular tunes survive time, no matter what circumstances change.
- Agrarian lives make study impractical as labourers work from dawn to dusk to survive; include literacy issues and singing becomes more effective than reading.
- If you learn a song, if your house burns down, war comes, or some other calamity arises, you haven't lost a book.

David has not only taught me how to worship through his Psalms, he has been a strong foundational teacher of who and how wonderful God is. The Psalms pick me up in hard times, as they remind me of God's faithfulness and delivering power; and in times of joy, they accompany how good I feel. Take the time to learn them and you'll never be short of the power of God's Word in your life.

NOTES

- * In ages past, the Psalms themselves were sung in church and officials, such as Bishops, were not allowed to take office unless they knew the Psalms by heart. If you know the Psalms, you know all about God, His nature, His plan for His people and have a solid moral compass in life. It saddened me to learn that this was replaced in the church by the Book of Common Prayer, forcing the Psalms into a backseat which reduced their powerful role.
- Psalms where David is clearly teaching include 36,37,53 and 119.
- I have heard it stated that the first music was only used for spiritual purposes, and I have tried to research that claim and found it inconclusive. It seems illogical to me, that something which brings us so much enjoyment would only be used in such a limited manner; though I am open to being corrected. The precious can be sacred.



“Work the Problem?” What King David and Astronauts Have in Common

“At some point everything is going to go south on you. Everything is going to go south and you’re going to say ‘This is it. This is how I end.’ Now you can either accept that or you can get to work. That’s all it is. You just begin. You do the math, you solve one problem. Then you solve the next one, and then the next and if you solve enough problems you get to come home.”

This quote comes from the movie *The Martian*, where N.A.S.A. astronaut Mark Watney, must survive on Mars after he is stranded by his crew who presumed he was dead.

I read this quote and it made me wonder how close this is to what David did when he escaped *King Achish of Gath, was persecuted by Saul, had to rescue his family from the Amalekites, and then when he had to ensure that he wasn’t accused of King Ishbosheth’s death. In short, David had a lot of nasty scrapes to get out of, not including the dangers he faced in battle, and the challenges his reign later faced. He was a fast thinker, a diplomat and a problem solver and this saved him from an early death. David “worked the problem” and didn’t give up until he found an answer.



Or did he?

Mark Watney was modelled off the experience of real astronauts who like warrior kings, face deadly challenges in the course of a normal day. Commander Chris Hadfield is a former Canadian Space Agency astronaut. He is the first Canadian to walk in space, and the first to command the International Space Station. In his book, *An Astronaut’s Guide to Life on Earth*, Chris shares this:

“I’m not terrified, because I’ve been trained, for years, by multiple teams of experts who have helped me to think through how to handle just about every conceivable situation that could occur between launch and landing... In my experience, fear comes from not knowing what to expect and not feeling you have any control over what’s about to happen. When you feel helpless, you’re far more afraid than you would be if you knew the facts... I’ve learned how to push past fear... People tend to think astronauts have the courage of a superhero – or maybe the emotional range of a robot. But in order to stay calm in a high-stress, high-stakes situation, all you really need is knowledge.”

If there is one thing that David has taught me, it’s to disagree with that sentence.

David didn’t rely on his experience and problem solving skills alone, he bought a more powerful risk management party into the equation.

“Once again David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered him, “Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand.” 1 Samuel 23:4

“David was now in great danger because all his men were very bitter about losing their sons and daughters, and they began to talk of stoning him. But David found strength in the Lord his God. Then he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring me the ephod!” So Abiathar brought it. Then David asked the Lord, “Should I chase after this band of raiders? Will I catch them?” And the Lord told him, “Yes, go after them. You will surely recover everything that was taken from you!” 1 Samuel 30:6-8

"After this, David asked the Lord, "Should I move back to one of the towns of Judah?"

"Yes," the Lord replied.

Then David asked, "Which town should I go to?"

"To Hebron," the Lord answered." 2 Samuel 2:1

"So David asked the Lord, "Should I go out to fight the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?" The Lord replied to David, "Yes, go ahead. I will certainly hand them over to you."

2 Samuel 5:19

"And again David asked the Lord what to do. "Do not attack them straight on," the Lord replied. "Instead, circle around behind and attack them near the poplar trees."

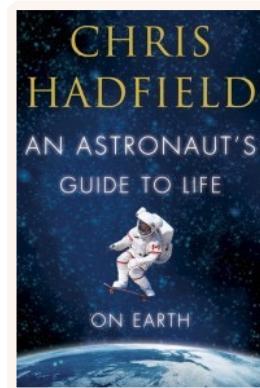
2 Samuel 5:23

"There was a famine during David's reign that lasted for three years, so David asked the Lord about it. And the Lord said, "The famine has come because Saul and his family are guilty of murdering the Gibeonites." 2 Samuel 21:1

David was smart enough not to rely on his own abilities, but to ask God for guidance and depend on Him as a partner in battle and life. From the history of Isra'el, David knew that God had delivered His people miraculously many times and David wasn't a conceited high achiever who believed that he didn't need that same help.

That was the making of David: more than his prowess in battle, his courage, his charisma or his quick wits. He loved God more than his own reputation and if we do the same, we'll never be lost or hopelessly afraid again.

*"The Lord lives! Praise to my Rock!
May God, the Rock of my salvation, be exalted!
He is the God who pays back those who harm me;
He brings down the nations under me
and delivers me from my enemies.
You hold me safe beyond the reach of my enemies;
You save me from violent opponents.
For this, O Lord, I will praise You among the nations;
I will sing praises to Your Name.
You give great victories to Your king;
You show unfailing love to Your anointed,
to David and all his descendants forever." 2 Samuel 22:47-51*



NOTES

- Achish: 1 Samuel 21, then again in chapters 27 and 29

- Amalekites: 1 Samuel 30

- Death of Ishbosheth: 2 Samuel 4.



Yesterday's Hero: Ancient Politics or, How to Keep a King Humble

This song, by John Paul Young*, reminds me of some of the challenges David faced:

*"Take a look at me, I'm yesterday's hero,
And yesterday's hero is all that I'm gonna be if I don't get together,
Make a new start and be somebody better,
All that I'll be if I don't get together now...
If you followed my story,
Then just be glad you ain't in my shoes."*

In my Twitter feed today, Franklin Graham made this comment on the 2016 U.S.A. election: "Our nation is broken and the fix isn't through any person or political party, but will only come through turning to God."

Nothing has changed in three thousand years. The populace still blames their leaders for the nation's problems, no matter how complex, and unless that leader can turn the situation around, (be that within their power or not,) the people want them out. Reason, fairness and faith have nothing to do with it.

David went through the same thing repeatedly, and it is recorded in the Psalms. "*Many people say, "Who will show us better times?" Let your face smile on us, Lord.*" Psalm 4:6

Israel was looking for stability, prosperity and salvation, but ironically and sinfully, God's own people were looking for answers in man, not God. They put David into power because they thought he could solve their problems.

"Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in. And the Lord said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.'" So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the Lord at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel." 2 Samuel 5:1-3

However, when David didn't solve the problems of the nation as they expected, or do things the way they wanted, he became yesterday's hero and there were multiple attempts to oust him.

*"I have heard the many rumours about me,
and I am surrounded by terror.
My enemies conspire against me,
plotting to take my life.
But I am trusting you, O Lord,
saying, "You are my God!"* Psalm 31:13-14

We don't know every reason why David faced opposition, but here are some of the most likely scenarios. Firstly, power challenges are simply the fate of any leader: someone else wants the power, fame and wealth you hold. In modern politics, we see parties wrangling to be elected to power through dirty deeds, arguments and rhetoric. In other countries, military coups take place, which happened to David via his son, Absalom, in 2 Samuel chapters 13-19.

Secondly, some of the tribe of Benjamin were never happy that the leadership of Isra'el was taken over by the tribe of Judah: God's choice of man did not matter to them, and this is demonstrated in 2 Samuel 16 with Shimei, and again in chapter 20 with Sheba. There were also problems with David's favouritism towards the closest tribes to him, Benjamin and Judah, which rumpled feathers all over Isra'el. (2 Samuel 19)

If that isn't enough domestic trouble, the Psalms record attempts to bribe King David and opposition to his godly behaviour. He didn't fit the status quo, or the plans of the wicked, so they wanted him gone. (References below.)

To that, you need to add in the effect of stress, hopelessness and exhaustion on the people, that would have been caused by Isra'el's national security problems. After David became King, there were at least another twenty years of war ahead for Isra'el. As strong a leader as he was, the process of winning would take time and a weary nation didn't necessarily wish to wait. They wanted better lives, now and any perceived failure to deliver would have made David unpopular.

Long term insecurity with warring and raiding neighbours would have had the people living in terror and would also have had a detrimental economic impact. For example, in Saul's time, the Philistines wouldn't allow Israel to have blacksmiths. The nation was being held for ransom by forced dependence on their enemies for blacksmithing services. This would have affected agriculture and many aspects of how the people of Isra'el lived, not just weapons. I don't know if this was still occurring in David's time, but it does illustrate the problems Isra'el had and that David was up against. [Ref: 1 Samuel 13:19-22]

Whatever reason, David did not reign without facing as much trouble from his own people, as he faced from the surrounding warring nations, who wanted Isra'el's territory. While much of Isra'el is now desert and desolate due to land clearing, over farming and war; three thousand years ago, Isra'el borders included a major western trade route which could potentially controlled for profit (like the ancient city of Petra.) It was a lush place, with high rainfall and lucrative natural resources. In short: a land of milk, where cattle could thrive and honey, where the land yielded abundantly. For an opposing nation, gain was also to be had by taking slaves. Isra'el was valuable and David's enemies went to a great deal of trouble to get at him.

*"How long will you people ruin my reputation?
How long will you make groundless accusations?
How long will you continue your lies?" Psalm 4:2*

*"I come to you for protection, O Lord my God.
Save me from my persecutors—rescue me!
If you don't, they will maul me like a lion,
tearing me to pieces with no one to rescue me." Psalm 7:1-2*

*"My future is in your hands.
Rescue me from those who hunt me down relentlessly." Psalm 31:15*

*"Malicious witnesses testify against me.
They accuse me of crimes I know nothing about." Psalm 35:11*

*"Confuse them, Lord, and frustrate their plans,
for I see violence and conflict in the city.
Its walls are patrolled day and night against invaders,
but the real danger is wickedness within the city.
Everything is falling apart;
threats and cheating are rampant in the streets.
It is not an enemy who taunts me—
I could bear that.
It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me—
I could have hidden from them.
Instead, it is you—my equal,
my companion and close friend.
What good fellowship we once enjoyed
as we walked together to the house of God." Psalm 55:9-14*

David also faced cruel opposition from his family and friends. *"Even my own brothers pretend they don't know me; they treat me like a stranger." Psalm 69:8 "I am scorned by all my enemies and despised by my neighbours— even my friends are afraid to come near me." Psalm 31:11*

The threat of a takeover must have been so strong, those closest to David were scared of being on the wrong side, as they would have paid for that decision with their lives.

David had become yesterday's hero. His victory over Goliath was old news. His glory days in Saul's army were as good as forgotten. This breaks my heart for David, yet despite that, I can see how the political problems that David faced, greatly assisted in keeping his heart right with the Lord. Not having an easy reign kept him dependent on his God for deliverance, and stopped him from venturing too far down the easy track of excessive egotism. Had his head turned from faith to power, he would have become as lost as the wicked men of Isra'el.

Psalm 30 shows how David was swayed by his military and material success:

"When I was prosperous, I said,

"Nothing can stop me now!"

Your favour, O Lord, made me as secure as a mountain.

Then you turned away from me, and I was shattered." Psalm 30:6-7

In many Psalms, we read David lamenting not receiving answers from the Lord when he desperately needed them the most. *"O Lord, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in trouble?"* Psalm 10:1 (This is also seen in Psalms 22:19, Psalm 13, Psalm 35:17-22 and Psalm 6:2-3.)

If David had been placed in power by the Lord to deliver Isra'el from her enemies, why would the Lord play cat and mouse at the worst possible times? The answer is complex, but simple**. Kings are used to absolute power and having people respond to their summons. The Lord did not respond to every summons, no matter how humble, or desperate, as David had to learn that he served a far greater King, and it was critical that he live his life in total submission to that Sovereign's standards. *"My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees."* Psalm 119:71

By not being allowed absolute success and on demand, priority access to the throne of God, David stayed spiritually whole, even when physically and mentally hurting. That kept him on track and also allowed the Lord to make Isra'el safe... and to be able to bless us with David's legacy of the Psalms to build up and inspire us.

Can any of this apply to us? Yes. David's experience reminds us that the suffering we face makes us grow, develop our character and respect God, so that we don't become unrighteous, spoiled brats. As much as it hurts, or as confused as we are as to why God hasn't fixed everything the way we thought He would, shouldn't be given everything too readily. For the Lord to smother us in too greater abundance, would be our ruin too. Like it or not, we need to suffer.

*"The Lord looks down from heaven
and sees the whole human race.*

*From his throne he observes
all who live on the earth.*

*He made their hearts,
so he understands everything they do.*

*The best-equipped army cannot save a king,
nor is great strength enough to save a warrior.*

*Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory—
for all its strength, it cannot save you.*

*But the Lord watches over those who fear him,
those who rely on his unfailing love.*

*He rescues them from death
and keeps them alive in times of famine.*

We put our hope in the Lord.

He is our help and our shield." Psalm 33:13-20

*Yesterday's Hero, John Paul Young, 1975: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmf1l4faFuw>



Only Published on the Masada Rain Blog

David's Stelae: The Psalms as Public Memorials and Private Prayers

"I will tell of the marvellous things You have done." Psalm 9:1b
"I will exalt You, Lord, because You have rescued me." Psalm 30:1a

A stele is "*an upright stone slab or pillar bearing an inscription or design and serving as a monument, marker, or the like.*" [Source: Dictionary.com] They were widely used in the Near East millennia before David, and well after his time. It was standard practice for kings to have steles and statues of themselves made as positive propaganda to support their reign. However, David didn't follow this practice. In line with the *ten commandments, he didn't have himself pictured with a representation of YHWH behind him, neither did he carve his achievements in stone. Apart from the book of Samuel and 1 Chronicles, the only memorials we have to David are his Psalms, some of which could be likened to victory steles, and others which have an interesting function.

Roughly half of all the Psalms that are attributed to David were sent to the choir director and made public, and 50% of those Psalms were written when he was in great distress. We don't know how the other Psalms were used, but it is possible that the ones which have not been specifically marked as "*for the choir director*" were in his personal collection, then organised into books after his death. His Psalms which are marked as prayers: 17, 86, and 142, were notably not sent to the choir director.

Some of the Psalms that were made public had national themes: Psalm 60 was written while David grappled with Israel's failures in the battle in the Valley of Salt, and is noted as being useful for teaching; the wording of Psalm 67 is a mix of a prayer and a benediction; and Psalm 58 is an outspoken challenge to the people of Israel on justice [see the final chapter below for clarification]. David also sent Psalm 53 to the choir director, making a public statement of faith with "only fools deny God."

Using my own classification of the Psalms (I get lost in the theological classifications, so I divided them further for my own use), these are the victory Psalms that David wanted sung before the Lord:

- Psalm 9: I will tell of all the marvellous things You have done.
- Psalm 18: When rescued from Saul and the enemies in that period of time.
- Psalm 20: May the Lord answer all your prayers.
- Psalm 21: How the king rejoices in Your strength, O Lord!
- Psalm 30: Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.

The Psalms of joy and wonder, plus David's statements of faith that were sent to the choir director include Psalms 8, 11, 19, 62, 65, 66, 67, 53 and 58.

One thing which occurred to me when looking at which Psalms were attributed to specific events and could be considered memorials, is that there are no Psalms specifically linked to David's most notable victories such as killing Goliath, bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, or his battle achievements. He didn't mention God's special covenant with Him, or his plans to build the temple; (neither did David ask for it to be named after him.) This is a testament to David's humility, despite the moral dips which occurred with Bathsheba and the census.

The stone tablet with the code written on it. This was placed in a public space so that all could read it.

God is always the focus of David's songs, which is another significant difference between him and any other ruler. He never claims honour or victory for himself. For an example, read the **Code of Hammurabi which has massive chunks at the beginning and end, glorifying and justifying the rule of Hammurabi. For example: "*Hammurabi, the prince... making riches and increase, enriching Nippur and Dur-ilu beyond compare... who conquered the four quarters of the world, made great the name of Babylon...who enriched Ur; the humble, the reverent, who brings wealth...*"

David's work shows that he was transparent in how he talked about his life in public and that he wasn't hung up on appearances. He freely admitted his faults and struggles and the glory for his successes always went to the Lord. Psalm 51, which speaks of his correction by Nathan over Bathsheba, and how sin affected him, was made public. Whether that was to address his sin because it was public knowledge, or whether it was to be used as a teaching aid to strengthen the faith of the people and encourage righteousness, or both, I honestly don't know.

Psalm 3, which was about when he fled from Absalom, Psalm 34 where he escaped from Philistine territory feigning madness and Psalm 52, where he was betrayed by Doeg to Saul, weren't marked for use by the choir director either. Not using Psalm 52 appears odd, as all the other betrayal Psalms were publicly sung. Perhaps it wasn't copied or notated correctly, or perhaps David had some private reason for not sending it on? I wish I knew.

These are the Psalms which have a definite event associated with them and could be considered a form of victory stele.

- 7 - concerning Cush of the tribe of Benjamin
- 18 - rescued from all enemies and Saul [PUBLIC]
- 30 - dedication of the temple / house [PUBLIC]
- 54 - betrayed by Ziphites [PUBLIC]
- 56 - seized at Gath [PUBLIC]
- 57 - when fled from Saul and went to the cave [PUBLIC]
- 59 - soldiers watching his house [PUBLIC]



The last point of interest is David's request that two Psalms which relate to persecution by Saul, (57 and 59,) be sung to the tune "Do Not Destroy." Knowing the old title attached to that melody would add a clear message to the Psalm, which would be noted by anyone knowing that piece of music. Other Psalmists also requested the same for their work. "Do Not Destroy" is also the melody which was selected for Psalm 58: "*Justice—do you rulers know the meaning of the word?*" In Bible Hub's interlinear Bible, "ruler" is elem, or congregation. [Strong's Number 482] It is a masculine word, which is culturally correct as the assembly of believers was all male in David's time. Some Bibles say gods, some say sons of men. There is no correct consensus. It is a source of profound frustration to me that words such as this are so poorly translated in our Bibles, and a reminder to dig deeper to find the true meaning of the Word of God.

NOTES

- * "*You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*" Exodus 20:4-6
- **The Code of Hammurabi translated by L.W. King <http://www.general-intelligence.com/library/hr.pdf> and the Louvre Museum's page on it: <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/law-code-hammurabi-king-babylon>



Bible Geek: Feeling Limited by “Technology?”

As far as I was concerned, technology wasn't really around to make us feel inadequate until the early 1950s, or whenever computers came into being. Some say that Konrad Zuse started building computers in the 1930s, others argue that it was Charles Babbage in 1838... others point out that ancient computers were made as early as 205 BC, such as the Antikythera Mechanism which was found in a sunken ship. But that all depends on your definition of computers.



The word ‘technology,’ has a wider breadth of meaning than things you plug in, or that which tortures you via binary. Working my way through Berkeley's Near Eastern Studies video lectures on archaeology, I have been surprised at how often the word is mentioned. The simple definition of the word is “machinery and devices developed from scientific knowledge,” even if that knowledge is more practical wisdom than academic. In practical terms it means, anything your enemies have, that you don't have, and fear will be used against you.

Around 1600 BC, (BCE is not a term I use) horses were first used in the Middle East as weapons of war, as the bridle and bit had been invented. Apparently, one of the new nation of Isra'el's greatest concerns in settling in the Promised Land was these horses and the amazing abilities of the chariots they were hooked up to.

“But the mountain shall be yours, for it is a forest, and you shall cut it down. And the outer limits of it shall be yours. For you shall drive out the Canaanites, even though they have iron chariots and though they are strong.” Joshua 17:18

To us, this is ancient outdated technology in an age where we have drones, tanks and all manner of aircraft which would bomb a stone city to oblivion easily; but back then, such an innovation was a massive road block and a test of faith. When all you had was donkeys, time tested basic weapons and a lot of common sense, that could lead them to say, “we'll never win this one.” But common sense can be the enemy of faith. All Isra'el had to do was look to the Lord for deliverance and chariots would not be a problem. God proved that with Jericho.

Joshua 6:2: “And Jehovah said to Joshua, See, I have given Jericho into your hand, and its king, and the mighty men of war.” And He did, spectacularly when the walls came down under divine power.

Saul was also up against superior technology when he was battling against the Philistines. In 1 Samuel 13:19 then 32 we see that the latest and greatest new weapons, were not available to the Isra'elites. *“And there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel. For the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears.”* “*And it happened in the day of battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan. But with Saul and with his son Jonathan there was found sword and spear.”*

Did that stop the Lord from delivering His people out of the hand of the Philistines? No. Even though the battle was considered lost and the people were deserting, God won through. *“And Jehovah saved Israel that day, and the battle passed over to Beth-aven.”* 2 Samuel 14:23

So regardless of what you do and don't have in any area of your life, or how ill prepared and outclassed you feel, if you rely on the Lord, there is hope for deliverance and victory. He is the One who is supposed to be your provider and victor. Salvation will never come through a gadget.



What David Would Say to You on a Bad Day

David was no stranger to having a bad day:

*"Save me, O God,
for the floodwaters are up to my neck.
Deeper and deeper I sink into the mire;
I can't find a foothold.
I am in deep water,
and the floods overwhelm me.
I am exhausted from crying for help;
my throat is parched.
My eyes are swollen with weeping,
waiting for my God to help me."* Psalm 69:1-3

If you're having a really bad time, try these words of encouragement:

*"Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.
My victory and honour come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.
O my people, trust in Him at all times.
Pour out your heart to Him,
for God is our refuge."* Psalm 62:5-8

*"The wicked has many sorrows, but mercy embraces him who trusts in Jehovah.
Be glad in Jehovah, and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart."*
Psalm 32:10-11

*"The righteous cry, and Yahweh hears,
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
Yahweh is near to those who have a broken heart,
and saves those who have a crushed spirit.
Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but Yahweh delivers him out of them all.
He protects all of his bones.
Not one of them is broken.
Evil shall kill the wicked.
Those who hate the righteous shall be condemned.
Yahweh redeems the soul of his servants.
None of those who take refuge in him shall be condemned."*
Psalm 34:17-22



Succession, Sin and Subjugation:

An Observation on the Eternal Consequences of Rejecting Theocratic Rule

From looking at the stories of various monarchs throughout history I have discovered that:

If you [the subjects,] repeatedly treat an ordinary person as a rock star, he will eventually begin to act with an inflated sense of entitlement.

If you repeatedly bow to someone with reverence, give them everything they ask for, fear challenging their will and esteem them on a much higher level than any person deserves or needs, you will produce a royal with an inflated ego, capable of abusing their position...

...and it will partially be your fault that they have done so.

In the Netflix series “The Crown,” when Elisabeth’s father, King George V dies, Elisabeth visits Buckingham Palace to grieve her father and is confronted by the awful spectre of her mother and sister bowing to her as the new Monarch. She was utterly horrified, but forced to take it. It is one of the loneliest scenes I’ve ever watched in a drama and sadly, it is based on the truth. The British Royal family arrive, eat, and even open their Christmas presents - as a family - in a specific pecking order, with the Queen at the top.



It is set etiquette which has been around for many generations and to us, it's inhuman; but what must it be like for them? Would you like to live like that, with no freedom to reject etiquette and be yourself? The family pressure on Elisabeth to conform, let alone the political and cultural pressure, was not crushing, it was more like a slow, violent series of personality and independence-smashing shocks. I sincerely hope this dramatized portrayal of what she went through is wildly inaccurate, but it shows the institution of royalty from a perspective that is a strong contrast to the next monarch mentioned.

King David's grandson, Rehoboam, is an example of the worst kind of monarch who was drunk with power rather than suffocated by it. He is everything that Samuel had warned the people about, and that generation of Israelites who demanded a king are directly responsible for this outcome which affected their great-grandchildren, (and technically responsible for later generations going into captivity, as they had set up a system which allowed godless kings to destroy Isra'el's covenant with YHWH, their God. There is a big lesson there, in being careful what decisions you make.)

“Then King Rehoboam discussed the matter with the older men who had counselled his father, Solomon. “What is your advice?” he asked. “How should I answer these people?” The older counsellors replied, “If you are willing to be a servant to these people today and give them a favourable answer, they will always be your loyal subjects.” But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the older men and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and were now his advisers. “What is your advice?” he asked them. “How should I answer these people who want me to lighten the burdens imposed by my father?” The young men replied, “This is what you should tell those complainers who want a lighter burden: ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist! Yes, my father laid heavy burdens on you, but I’m going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!’” 1 Kings 12

Making decisions that effect others is really easy when you live in privileged isolation, as you have no real idea of what you've done; you just feel the kick your ego gives you.

The distinction between a king and a commoner is massive and God never designed His Kingdom to be structured this way. The earlier Mesopotamian move towards placing kings in power

condemned many generations of young men, in many cultures, to sinful, abnormal lives. They were given privileges that an egalitarian society would never permit, and paved the way to endless generations of men who perpetrates social injustices, as mankind's psyche was not built to accommodate such excesses and certainly not without sufficient equals to balance the sanity equation. This is part of why I don't believe Isra'el ever should have had kings.

Whenever you step outside of God's plan for His people, you will generate massive sin. YHWH, "I AM," the one true God of Isra'el, was the only One who was ever meant to be in a position of power over Isra'el, speaking through His prophets to the people and acting for the good of the community via His Levitical priesthood. When Isra'el rejected that system for worldly reasons, they opened themselves up to consequences which impacted every prince and king to come.

"Finally, all the elders of Isra'el met at Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel. "Look," they told him, "you are now old, and your sons are not like you. Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have." Samuel was displeased with their request and went to the Lord for guidance. "Do everything they say to you," the Lord replied, "for it is me they are rejecting, not you. They don't want me to be their king any longer. Ever since I brought them from Egypt they have continually abandoned me and followed other gods. And now they are giving you the same treatment. Do as they ask, but solemnly warn them about the way a king will reign over them."

*So Samuel passed on the Lord's warning to the people who were asking him for a king. "This is how a king will reign over you," Samuel said. "The king will draft your sons and assign them to his chariots and his chariooteers, making them run before his chariots. Some will be generals and captains in his army, **some will be forced** to plow in his fields and harvest his crops, and some will make his weapons and chariot equipment. The king will take your daughters from you **and force them to** cook and bake and make perfumes for him. **He will take away the best** of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his own officials. **He will take** a tenth of your grain and your grape harvest and distribute it among his officers and attendants. **He will take** your male and female slaves **and demand the finest** of your cattle and donkeys for his own use. **He will demand** a tenth of your flocks, **and you will be his slaves.** **When that day comes, you will beg for relief from this king you are demanding, but then the Lord will not help you.**" But the people refused to listen to Samuel's warning. "Even so, we still want a king," they said. "We want to be like the nations around us. **Our king will judge us** [not God] and lead us into battle." 1 Samuel 8:4-20*

Society behaves very oddly towards monarchs. The image of the court, crown, castle, princesses, princes, chivalry, and wealth are romanticised and spoken of longingly in many, many fairy tales and works of fiction, while in reality, we hate the dictatorship and social inequality that being ruled brings. It is very easy to be a royal basher, but over time I have tried hard to find the humanity in people we don't really see as human and understand their story, which was how I wound up watching The Crown. That series made me realise that behind the emotionless face of Queen Elisabeth is a woman who has been through an awful lot and for all the wealth and fame, she has so little freedom. It also makes me think about what David sacrificed to be King, and it causes me to wonder more about the generations that came after him and why so many were godless (aside from the obvious answer being greed.)

If we could go back in time and stop that first king in Mesopotamia from being crowned, we'd have to go to many places in many points in time, and stop the equivalent from happening. Mankind understandably wants security and good leadership, but the price that has been paid in power battles, wars, destroyed lives and peasant's poverty is grossly appalling. If only we'd look only to the Lord as leader... life would be so much better and history would have been far more interesting.



Comparing David with The Art of War by Sun Tzu

The Art of War by the ancient Chinese warrior, Sun Tzu is one of those books you're told you have to read if you're in the military, in business or in any endeavour where you face tough competition. After watching a documentary on how modern battles have been won or lost in accordance with the book's advice, I sat down with my Bible and had a look at how David fit in with Sun Tzu's recommendations.

It's worth acknowledging that this book is only one point of view on how to engage in warfare. I was very surprised that it does not contain any spiritual content, which is the real source of David's success and which I have included below. What it does contain, is a lot of common sense: the kind that we all should know, but often have to be reminded of when the heat is on and fear levels rise.

The book is public domain and available free from a number of places. It's a short read which also contains a lot of commentary and interpretation. You can get it from iBooks or Project Gutenberg. There are also many commercially available copies with commentaries. <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/132>

He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight.

David adds a critical and effective dimension of spiritual wisdom and obedience to this.

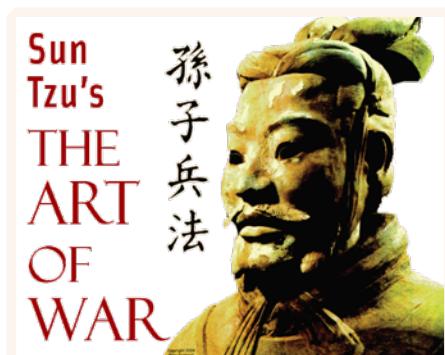
a) 1 Samuel 23: David Protects the Town of Keilah

"One day news came to David that the Philistines were at Keilah stealing grain from the threshing floors. David asked the Lord, "Should I go and attack them?" "Yes, go and save Keilah," the Lord told him.

But David's men said, "We're afraid even here in Judah. We certainly don't want to go to Keilah to fight the whole Philistine army!"

So David asked the Lord again, and again the Lord replied, "Go down to Keilah, for I will help you conquer the Philistines."

So David and his men went to Keilah. They slaughtered the Philistines and took all their livestock and rescued the people of Keilah."



b) 1 Samuel 30:1-20, esp 7-9: "Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Please bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" And He said to him, "Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue all." So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those left behind remained."

Then 18-20 "So David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives. But nothing of theirs was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken for themselves; David brought it all back. So David had captured all the sheep and the cattle which the people drove ahead of the other livestock, and they said, "This is David's spoil."

c) 2 Samuel 5:

"When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king of Israel, they mobilized all their forces to capture him. But David was told they were coming, so he went into the stronghold. The Philistines arrived and spread out across the valley of Rephaim. So David asked the Lord, "Should I go out to fight the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?"

The Lord replied to David, "Yes, go ahead. I will certainly hand them over to you."

So David went to Baal-perazim and defeated the Philistines there. "The Lord did it!" David exclaimed. "He burst through my enemies like a raging flood!" So he named that place Baal-perazim (which means "the Lord who bursts through")."

He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout it's ranks.

David cultivated the moral law by obedience to the Torah and acting in accordance with its commands. Isra'el was in a covenant relationship with the Lord.

2 Samuel 10: "When Joab saw that he would have to fight on both the front and the rear, he chose some of Israel's elite troops and placed them under his personal command to fight the Arameans in the fields. He left the rest of the army under the command of his brother Abishai, who was to attack the Ammonites. "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then come over and help me," Joab told his brother. "And if the Ammonites are too strong for you, I will come and help you. Be courageous! Let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. May the Lord's will be done."

If you wish to read further, Leviticus 26:1-12 speaks of the blessings for obedience for those in a covenant relationship with God, which includes victory over enemies.

Never besiege a walled city.

Sun Tzu believes that it's a bad strategy as the General may become impatient and make mistakes. David seemed successful in doing this. In an earlier chapter, Joab has gone before him and set up the siege.

2 Samuel 12: "Meanwhile, Joab was fighting against Rabbah, the capital of Ammon, and he captured the royal fortifications. Joab sent messengers to tell David, "I have fought against Rabbah and captured its water supply. Now bring the rest of the army and capture the city. Otherwise, I will capture it and get credit for the victory."

So David gathered the rest of the army and went to Rabbah, and he fought against it and captured it. David removed the crown from the king's head, and it was placed on his own head. The crown was made of gold and set with gems, and it weighed seventy-five pounds. David took a vast amount of plunder from the city. He also made slaves of the people of Rabbah and forced them to labor with saws, iron picks, and iron axes, and to work in the brick kilns. That is how he dealt with the people of all the Ammonite towns. Then David and all the army returned to Jerusalem."

The greatest victory is that which requires no battle.

2 Samuel 8; "After this, David defeated and subdued the Philistines by conquering Gath, their largest town." He had no further issues with the Philistines until years later in 2 Samuel 21. This appears to be a twenty year gap.

An army shouldn't be led by the sovereign / shouldn't be hampered by a central authority.

According to Sun Tzu, kings should govern with humility and justice; but armies should be governed by opportunism and flexibility and they need to use lies and deception. "Let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night, and when you move, fall like a thunderbolt." Like Napoleon, David was both liberator and ruler and despite Sun Tzu's reservations, he has no trouble showing kindness and justice at home and being efficient in battle. "So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people." 2 Samuel 8:15 and 2 Samuel 3:36: "This pleased the people very much. In fact, everything the king did pleased them!" There are also many incidences where David's kindness was evident in how he treated people who were of lesser status than he was.

- Abiathar, 1 Samuel 22:20-23
- Barzillai 2 Samuel 19:-
- Rizpah 2 Samuel 21:10-14
- Ittai 2 Samuel 15:16-23
- Mephibosheth 2 Samuel 9:1-12 and 2 Samuel 19:24-39
- Mercy to Shimei 2 Samuel 19:19-21

There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare.

Psalm 4:6: "Many people say, "Who will show us better times?" Let your face smile on us, Lord." Raids and wars depressed Isra'el's economy as crops, cattle and other valuable possessions were regularly stolen or destroyed, and going to war every year meant that the country couldn't stabilise. Trade would have also been affected. There are also problems like these, which stem from oppression by near enemies: "Not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, because the Philistines had said, "Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears!" 1 Samuel 13:19

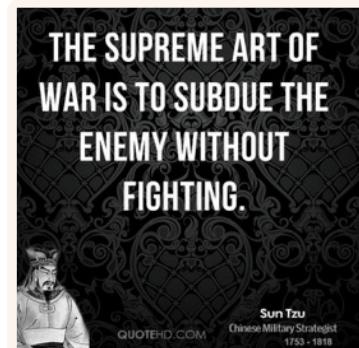
Treat your men as you would your own beloved sons. And they will follow you into the deepest valley.

David certainly inspired deep devotion. 1 Samuel 23: "Once during the harvest, when David was at the cave of Adullam, the Philistine army was camped in the valley of Rephaim. The Three (who were among the Thirty—an elite group among David's fighting men) went down to meet him there. David was staying in the stronghold at the time, and a Philistine detachment had occupied the town of Bethlehem.

David remarked longingly to his men, "Oh, how I would love some of that good water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem." So the

Three broke through the Philistine lines, drew some water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem, and brought it back to David. But he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out as an offering to the Lord. "The Lord forbid that I should drink this!" he exclaimed.

"This water is as precious as the blood of these men who risked their lives to bring it to me." So David did not drink it. These are examples of the exploits of the Three."



A leader leads by example, not by force.

In 1 Samuel 24 and 26 David sets a strong example to his men in how he treats Saul.

"At the place where the road passes some sheepfolds, Saul went into a cave to relieve himself. But as it happened, David and his men were hiding farther back in that very cave!

"Now's your opportunity!" David's men whispered to him. "Today the Lord is telling you, 'I will certainly put your enemy into your power, to do with as you wish.'" So David crept forward and cut off a piece of the hem of Saul's robe.

But then David's conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul's robe. "The Lord knows I shouldn't have done that to my Lord the king," he said to his men. "The Lord forbid that I should do this to my Lord the king and attack the Lord's anointed one, for the Lord himself has chosen him." So David restrained his men and did not let them kill Saul." 1 Samuel 24:3-7

Sun Tzu agrees with David that plunder should be equally divided among all men.

1 Samuel 30: "Then David returned to the brook Besor and met up with the 200 men who had been left behind because they were too exhausted to go with him. They went out to meet David and his men, and David greeted them joyfully. But some evil troublemakers among David's men said, "They didn't go with us, so they can't have any of the plunder we recovered. Give them their wives and children, and tell them to be gone."

But David said, "No, my brothers! Don't be selfish with what the Lord has given us. He has kept us safe and helped us defeat the band of raiders that attacked us. Who will listen when you talk like this? We share and share alike—those who go to battle and those who guard the equipment." From then on David made this a decree and regulation for Israel, and it is still followed today."

If an enemy comes to you with compliments, they want a truce.

2 Samuel 3:6-21: "It came about while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David that Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul. Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah; and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, "Why have you

gone in to my father's concubine?" Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hands of David; and yet today you charge me with a guilt concerning the woman. "May God do so to Abner, and more also, if as the Lord has sworn to David, I do not accomplish this for him, to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba." And he could no longer answer Abner a word, because he was afraid of him.

Then Abner sent messengers to David in his place, saying, "Whose is the land? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel over to you." He said, "Good! I will make a covenant with you, but I demand one thing of you, namely, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see me." So David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, to whom I was betrothed for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish. But her husband went with her, weeping as he went, and followed her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go, return." So he returned.

Now Abner had consultation with the elders of Israel, saying, "In times past you were seeking for David to be king over you. "Now then, do it! For the Lord has spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.' "Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin; and in addition Abner went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and to the whole house of Benjamin.

Then Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. Abner said to David, "Let me arise and go and gather all Israel to my Lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may be king over all that your soul desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace."

DAVID'S MILITARY HISTORY

- 1 Samuel 17: Goliath
- 1 Samuel 23 David Protects the Town of Keilah
- 1 Samuel 30: Gath activity
- 2 Samuel 5: Philistine vengeance
- 2 Samuel 8: David's Military Victories, including Gath
- 2 Samuel 10: David Defeats the Ammonites
- 2 Samuel 12: Rabbah
- 2 Samuel 21: Battles against Philistine Giants
- 2 Samuel 23: David's Mightiest Warriors
- 1 Chronicles 11, 12: David captures Jerusalem, David's Warriors
- 1 Chronicles 18: David's Military Victories
- 1 Chronicles 19: David Defeats the Ammonites (Psalm 60)
- 1 Chronicles 20: David Captures Rabbah
- 1 Chronicles 27: Military Commanders and Divisions

FURTHER READING

Deuteronomy 20 outlines the regulations on how the Israelites should act at war that God gave to Moses.



When Terrifying Psalms Suddenly Look Quite Tame

Over the last six months I have been studying ancient history from a secular point of view, in order to understand the culture of Isra'el and the forces which shaped her idolatry. It's been a fascinating time which I have enjoyed, but it has taken me to some pretty dark places!

To understand David and what social mindsets slid into the Psalms, I have looked at a number of pagan hymns, the epic of Gilgamesh and this week, the Code of the Babylonian King, Hammurabi. One thing sure stood out to me: if you thought Psalms such as Psalm 109 were pretty savage, you aint seen nothing yet! **Trigger Warning: violent, gory content.**

Here is a hit of Babylonian royal ego which will make you think about David's roughest works in a completely different way. His slant is more towards divine justice than calling down divine revenge. I will leave it to you to mull over the contrast. I am still getting my head around it.

First, here is one of David's Psalms of vengeance, Psalm 58:

"For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune "Do Not Destroy!"

"Justice—do you rulers know the meaning of the word?

Do you judge the people fairly?

No! You plot injustice in your hearts.

You spread violence throughout the land.

*These wicked people are born sinners;
even from birth they have lied and gone their own way.*

*They spit venom like deadly snakes;
they are like cobras that refuse to listen,
ignoring the tunes of the snake charmers,
no matter how skilfully they play.*

Break off their fangs, O God!

Smash the jaws of these lions, O Lord!

May they disappear like water into thirsty ground.

Make their weapons useless in their hands.

*May they be like snails that dissolve into slime,
like a stillborn child who will never see the sun.*

*God will sweep them away, both young and old,
faster than a pot heats over burning thorns.*

The godly will rejoice when they see injustice avenged.

They will wash their feet in the blood of the wicked.

Then at last everyone will say,

*"There truly is a reward for those who live for God;
surely there is a God who judges justly here on earth."*

Now for Hammerabi. I have slashed this down to 273 words. There are another 1604 words in the epilogue where Hammurabi takes the time to say how great he is. Plus there is a heap more self exultation in the prologue. The odd names are all referring to pagan gods.

*"May Zamama, the great warrior, the first-born son of E-Kur,
who goeth at my right hand, shatter his weapons on the field
of battle, turn day into night for him, and let his foe triumph
over him. May Ishtar, the goddess of fighting and war, who
unfetters my weapons, my gracious protecting spirit, who
loveth my dominion, curse his kingdom in her angry heart; in
her great wrath, change his grace into evil, and shatter his*



weapons on the place of fighting and war. May she create disorder and sedition for him, strike down his warriors, that the earth may drink their blood, and throw down the piles of corpses of his warriors on the field; may she not grant him a life of mercy, deliver him into the hands of his enemies, and imprison him in the land of his enemies. May Nergal, the might among the gods, whose contest is irresistible, who grants me victory, in his great might burn up his subjects like a slender reedstalk, cut off his limbs with his mighty weapons, and shatter him like an earthen image. May Nin-tu, the sublime mistress of the lands, the fruitful mother, deny him a son, vouchsafe him no name, give him no successor among men. May Nin-karak, the daughter of Anu, who adjudges grace to me, cause to come upon his members in E-kur high fever, severe wounds, that can not be healed, whose nature the physician does not understand, which he can not treat with dressing, which, like the bite of death, can not be removed, until they have sapped away his life."

If you would like to read more, you can find the full, mind boggling legal code here. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/ham/index.htm> Some of it is very fair; some of it makes your head spin. They were hard times to be alive.



Appendices

Project Links



- ❖ Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fromdespairtodeliverance>
- ❖ Masada Rain Blog: <https://masadarain.wordpress.com>
- ❖ The Official Project Web Site: <http://cateartios.wix.com/kingdavidproject>
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Project Values

Many books, Bible Studies and devotions have been written about King David. Some focus on the negative side of his life and in response to that, I have decided to take a specific approach with this site and the book. That approach features the Biblical values below which are commands (mitzvahs) from God. This work has a seemingly dual focus, which is actually singular. I have Jewish ancestry, but have been raised a Christian so I do not claim to be a Messianic Jew; however, the Jewish approach to my work recognises and respects both my ancestry and King David's life as a Hebrew (Jewish) man and sovereign.

1. Compassion and No Judgement

- ~ Luke 6:37: "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven."
- ~ Matthew 7:2: "For with whatever judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with whatever measure you measure, it will be measured to you."
- ~ Hebrews 10:30: "For we know him who said, "Vengeance belongs to me," says the Lord, "I will repay." Again, "The Lord will judge his people."

2. Respect

- ~ 1 Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." David's spiritual role over Israel does qualify him as an elder and he was also a prophet.
- ~ 1 Chronicles 16:17: "Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!"

3. Biblical Accuracy

- ~ 2 Timothy 2:15: "Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth."

4. A Messianic-Jewish friendly environment and a respectful approach to Judaism.

I am aware of the translated parts of the Bible which can be seen as anti-Semitic and recognise the Jewishness of the Bible and especially, David's life. It will not be excluded and has been addressed in my Statement of Faith (link is at the base of each page, with the Copyright).



5. A pro-Israel focus with zero tolerance of haters

which is in line with the Scriptures and is what King David asks us to be. (Psalm 122) Anti-semitic viewpoints and arguers will be instantly ignored and/or blocked without response on linked social media etc.

- ~ Titus 3:9: "Do not get involved in foolish discussions about spiritual pedigrees or in quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws. These things are useless and a waste of time."



Statement of Faith



I am a fundamentalist Christian with Jewish ancestry and believe that the Bible, consisting of the Old Covenant/Testament (Tenach) and the later writings commonly known as the New Testament/Covenant (B'rit Hadasha), is the only infallible and authoritative word of God. I recognise its divine inspiration, and accept its teachings as our final authority in all matters of faith and practice (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 3:1-6; Psalm 119:89, 105; Isaiah 48:12-16; Romans 8:14-17; II Timothy 2:15, 3:16-17). I do not recognise the Apocryphal books in the Septuagint as the authoritative Word of God, neither do I recognise or use the teachings of the Talmud in any form.

~ **I believe that the prayer (Shema), "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one"** (Deuteronomy 6:4 Shema Yisroel Adonoi Eloheinu Adonoi Echa.), teaches that God is one (Echad), as so declared: a united one, a composite unity, eternally existent in plural oneness [Genesis 1:1 (Elohim: God); Genesis 1:26 "Let Us make man in Our image"; Genesis 2:24 Adam & Eve were created to be as one flesh (basar echad)], that He is a personal God who created us (Genesis 1 & 2), and that He exists forever in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as mentioned in Romans 8:14-17 (Father, Spirit, and Messiah - Son) and Matthew 28:18-20 (immersing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

~ **I believe that God the Father (Abba) is Our Heavenly Father** as shown in: John 6:27b; I Corinthians 1:3; Galatians 1:1; Revelation 3:5, 21; Jeremiah 3:4, 19; 31:9; Malachi 1:6; Matthew 6:9, 32; Luke 10:21-22; John 1:14; 4:23; 5:17-26; 6:28-46; Romans 8:14-15.

~ **I believe that God does have a Son who was and is and will return** (Psalm 2; Proverbs 30:4-6 (cf. Hebrews 1); Luke 12:35-37; John 1:29-34, 49; 3:14-18). The Son, called Jesus (Yeshua), meaning salvation, came to this world born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14 (cf. Luke 1:30-35)). The Son is God (Deity), and is worshiped as God, having existed eternally (Psalm 110:1 (cf. Hebrews 1:13); Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 28:18-20; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-19; Revelation 3:21 (Hebrews 1 - worshiped by angels); Revelations 4:8, 5:5-14). This One is the promised Messiah (Mashiach) of Israel (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1; Daniel 9 (especially verses 20-26); Isaiah 53; John 1:17, 40-41, 45, 49; Mark 8:29). He is the root and offspring of David, son of Jesse (Daviyd ben Yishai), the bright and morning star (Numbers 24:17; Revelation 22:16). He is our Passover, the Lamb of God (I Corinthians 5:7; Revelation 5; John 1:29).

~ **I believe in God, the Holy Spirit** (Ruach HaKodesh) as introduced in Genesis 1:2b: "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." In the Tenach, the Spirit of God came upon individuals during the times of our forefathers, like Moses, David (see II Samuel 23:1-3), and the Prophets, for the specific purposes. In the New Covenant, the Messiah Yeshua, promised His disciples that "the Comforter" would come to them after He was gone, described as the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17, 26), who was with them and would be in them. Yeshua further declared that the Spirit of Truth, would guide us into all truth and would glorify Him - the Messiah - not Himself (John 16:13-15). He empowers us (Acts 1:8). The Spirit of God seals us (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30 (see NIV and Jewish New Testament versions)). If we have not the Spirit, we are not His (Romans 8:9). He

leads us and teaches us (Romans 8:14-17). His indwelling enables us to live a godly life. Acts 2:38 says, "Repent, be immersed, and receive the Holy Spirit."

~ **I believe that men and women are created in the image of God** (Genesis 1:26-27), however because of disobedience, mankind fell from the first state and became separated from God (Genesis 2:17; 3:22-24). Therefore, according to the Scriptures, all humans are born with a sinful nature (Psalm 14:1-3; 49:7; 53:13; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:9-12, 23; 5:12). Our only hope for redemption (salvation) is through the atonement made by the Messiah (Leviticus 17:11; Isaiah 53; Daniel 9:24-26; I Corinthians 15:22; Hebrews 9:11-14, 28; John 1:12, 3:36), resulting in regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5), which is the new birth (John 3:3-8). For by grace we are saved through faith, it is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

~ **I believe in the resurrection** of both the redeemed and the lost: the former to everlasting life and the latter to eternal separation from God, a state of everlasting punishment (Job 14:14; 19:25-27; Daniel 12:2-3; John 3:36; 11:25-26; Revelation 20:5-6, 10-15; 21:7-8).

~ **I believe in the Messiah** (Mashiach), the Anointed One and Redeemer. The Scriptures promised two "comings" of the Messiah. The first coming as promised in Daniel 9:24-26. The initial coming's purpose was to make atonement (covering) for sin (Daniel 9:24-26; Isaiah 53; Romans 3:21-31; Hebrews 9-10; John 3:16-17)—as the Suffering Messiah. The Redeemer shall come to Zion (Tziyon) (Isaiah 59:20-21; Zechariah 14:4). The second coming: The Messiah Yeshua will return to the earth as King (Revelation 19:11-16). Upon His return, a many wonderful thing will happen: He will bring with Him an army of the Heavenly hosts, and those who went on before us (Revelation 19:14) and those who are still on earth will meet in the air to receive the believers to Himself (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 14:1-6; I Corinthians 15:51-57).

~ **I support Isra'el** in accordance with the Psalm 122:3-9 as written by King David (Daviyd Melek / Dovid Melek): Jerusalem, that is built "As a city that is compact together; To which the tribes (Shevatim) go up, even the tribes of the Lord -An ordinance for Israel - (edut l'Yisroel)To give thanks to the name of the Lord. For there thrones were set for judgment (kise'ot l'mishpat), the thrones of the house of David. (kise'ot of the Bais Daviyd or in Yiddish, Dovid).

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: (Sha'al shalom Yerushalayim)

"May they prosper who love you. "May peace be within your walls,

And prosperity within your palaces.

"For the sake of my brothers (achim) and my friends, I will now say, "

May peace be within you."

For the sake of (L'ma'an) the house of the Lord our God, (Bais Hashem Eloheinu)

I will seek your good." Psalm 122:3-9



Author Biography

Cate Russell-Cole has been a Christian since 1981 and is a qualified Creativity Coach, Author, Editor and Social Worker. She has been actively involved in church life since her teenage years and has served the Lord as a youth leader, desktop publisher, administrative assistant, writer, church reporter, magazine editor ("YOU" and "Echo" Lifehouse Christian Church, Coffs Harbour), intercessor, Sunday School teacher, ISCF leader and youth prayer coordinator.



Until early in 2015, Cate coached writers online through her CommuniCATE Resources for Writers blog, with a blog and social media following of over seven thousand people. Her commercial work had to be stopped due to chronic health problems, so instead, she followed her heart and devoted all her time to King David.

God once gave Cate a vision which encapsulates her journey in the Lord. She was standing on top of a mountain, with just enough room around her feet that she wasn't scared of falling off. In front of her there was a bridge that led to the throne of God, and when she looked up, she could see Jesus and the Father. When Cate looked down, the sides of the mountain were covered with nothing but knife sharp, pieces of jagged rock. There was no room to get a safe handhold. She couldn't go up or down without being cut to pieces. Jesus then said to her, "that is what I have bought you out of."

Cate lives in Brisbane, Australia with her husband and two cats and habitually writes everything in Australian English.

Over her career as a teacher and writer, she has researched, written and taught five creativity-orientated courses; worked as a freelance writer, graphic designer, desktop publisher and has authored ten non-fiction books. Privately, she is a Christian science fiction/ fantasy author who was working on The Chronicles of Mirchar Series. Cate has a love of the science fiction - fantasy genre and has been writing diaries, appalling poetry and short stories since she was a child.



Other Publications by Cate Russell-Cole

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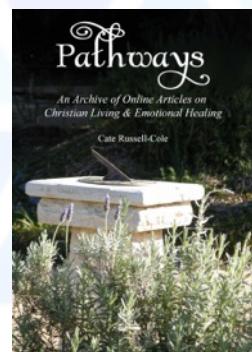
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An Archive of Online Articles on Christian Living and Emotional Healing

Pathways is a collection of the best of Cate Russell-Cole's published psychology-based relationship, emotion and Christian living feature articles, which were written between 1995 and 2016. Many of these articles were written for outreach publications, and thus, are not heavily 'preachy.' Regardless, this is a non-denominational Christian book. It may not suit more individualised Christian sectors and will not be useful for other religions.



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